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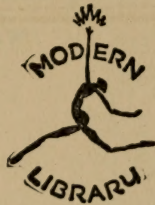
THE EMPEROR JONES
AND
THE STRAW

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THE EMPEROR JONES
THE STRAW

BY
EUGENE O'NEILL

INTRODUCTION BY
DUDLEY NICHOLS



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INTRODUCTION

Eugene O'Neill is our most modern dramatist in the sense that he alone has succeeded in breasting back across that ocean of two thousand years and more which rolls between our time and the ancient Greeks. He is like Euripides reborn, with a certain difference; for, transmigrating from Athens the old to America the new, the rebel Greek has dallied with the spirits of Jesus, Tolstoy, Ibsen, Strindberg, Wedekind, Nietzsche, Freud and all the other pioneers and rebels.

O'Neill has resurrected in himself that profound and mystical vitality of the Greeks by rediscovering paganism. If he does not actually bend the knee to Cybele and Dionysos, at least he worships those divine forces in nature which the images of the gods once rendered real. Those mysterious forces, still in rhythm in and around us if we but had eyes to see, were the immortal souls of the departed gods and the artist was and continues to be their only attending priest.

As a modern pagan O'Neill regains that har-

mony with nature which the West has lost. Having found this harmony with nature he must by necessity be out of harmony with much that is in the West. He himself is a Dion Anthony in whom "the creative pagan acceptance of life fights eternal war with the masochistic life-denying spirit of Christianity as represented by St. Anthony."

While his imaginative world and spiritual potency bear many points of resemblance to those of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, it is his likeness with the latter one would linger on. In O'Neill as in Sophocles fate, the prime motive of ancient tragedy, is no longer felt as a capricious external power but as the inevitable outcome of character and the unavoidable condition of life. Tragic pathos is refined to a sense of the universal human fellowship in frailty and suffering. And the dramatic interest of Euripides the rebel lay in the thought and experience of the ordinary individual. He completely shifted the tragic situation from a conflict between man and the divine laws of the universe to man's inner soul.

Aeschylus is said to have drawn his characters as they never could be (his Prometheus is indeed a god), Sophocles as he thought they should be, and

Euripides as they were. This youngest of the trio shocked his contemporaries by the realism with which he portrayed characters of mean station and no doubt his critics accused him of "morbid realism." But Euripides the rebel, the shocker, became for posterity Euripides the human, the understanding, and there is augury in that thought. Living in an age which contemned woman as the chattel of her man, he threw upon her all the light of his sympathy and insight. He was the first of the ancients, it is said, to understand woman; yet his enemies called him a misogynist. He was ahead of his time and the reward of pioneers is generally unpopularity or abuse. During his life he was almost continuously unpopular and he was in exile when he died.

A commentator should need no special courage to voice the opinion, if sincere, that a young man in our midst is as great as one of the sacred Greeks. It should be no sacrilege to say so if Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound" seems to be as great a poem as the "Prometheus Chained" of Aeschylus. The trouble is that men reach their peaks of celebrity in old age and it is by their peaks that their images are formed for posterity. It is by a

fault of imagination that we fail to remember that all mountains are upreared by the hot fires of youthful worlds.

So was the rebel Euripides once a young man with glowing eyes and a fiery heart, no whit different from the young man who wrote the two plays gathered in this volume. A book could be written about this parallel, but as these remarks are only by way of preface one must rest content with pointing out that the whole interest of Euripides lay in the workings of the human character and mind. The old myths appealed to him only as providing material for the study of man and of the mystery of life, just as the myths of Lazarus, Marco Polo and Ponce de Leon have appealed to O'Neill in latter times.

O'Neill cannot be classified, cannot be scraped into any school. He has no faction, he is an artist. In this respect he resembled Ibsen, who said: "I have no party, I take no sides save with those who believe in my third kingdom between paganism and Christianity." O'Neill takes no sides except with those who believe in life and its impenetrable mystery. He takes no part save that of poetry; and by poetry the present writer means that animating

spirit of all the arts, so that the terms artist and poet have a certain identity.

Men have written and continue to write that he has created no new ideas, that one can learn nothing from him. Such men cannot comprehend the simple statement that O'Neill is an artist and for the likes of them the word must be laid out and measured. Such men think that truth about life can be caught in verbal formulas, just as mathematicians catch the truth of certain relationships in nature in algebraic formulas. They do not apprehend that truth about life can only be expressed through works of art.

The writer once interviewed Joseph Conrad and will always remember how, when a man of letters who was present mentioned an anthology of "wisdom" culled from the novels by a well-intentioned old lady, a shadow of pain crossed Conrad's face and he protested, "I'm not a man of wisdom, I'm an artist." It was the poet rightly spurning the philosopher.

So much for those men who want truth about life expressed in verbal formulas, who want clock-work definitions of beauty, truth, life, God, happiness and tragedy. When we know next to nothing

about a thing we rest satisfied with a single word to name it; when we have learned a great deal about the same thing then all the words of all the tongues of man will not suffice to express its shadow. So must we turn to the artist.

He is a prism through whom life streams and is resolved into marvelous bands of color, in which we may discover by peering closely those ghostly stripes and shadows—Fraunhofer lines of the spectrum—which divinely intimate the source and character of that bright-streaming light which floods all space. And man becomes this thing, an artist, by penetrating the secret of the gods, by the discovery of form. The gods would shut him out, but he demands to share their secret and so becomes a creator on his own.

Sculpture is space rendered visible by the discovery of form; music is time made audible by form; life itself, one might say, is nature made self-visible and self-conscious by the discovery of form. And literature is life made intelligible by form. Form is the miraculous net with which the artist, the sub-creator, fishes out beauty from that mysterious invisibly-billowing abyss of space and time.

Nor is form a stereotyped thing. One of its inherent laws appears to be that of diversity. That is the urge which drives nature to such fantastical prodigality: no sooner has she created a maple tree than she must make an elm; no sooner has she evolved a monkey than she must make a man.

So it is with the artist, according to the native charge of energy which agitates his soul. The greater his power the greater his urge towards diversity of form. The old containers of life no longer satisfy, they have grown familiar. The maple tree has lost its sudden thrill and he must make an elm. We see this drive for experimentation in O'Neill from the very beginning, once he has grasped the rudiments of making.

"The Emperor Jones," dated 1920, shows him striking out with that boldness inherited from his mother nature and accomplishing what any respectable playwright of the period would have counseled him was quite impossible. It is little more than a monologue in eight scenes, yet how dramatic and electrifying it becomes on production.

How did it come to be written, this sudden departure from the usual? There is no clever

machinery behind the studio wall which can be transported to a Ford factory and employed in mass production. Nor is there any black box of magic. The young playwright met an old circus man who told him the story of how President Sam of Hayti always kept a silver bullet for his own eventual quietus. Ideas swarmed in his mind but he could not form the play in his imagination. He laid it by for a year. One day he read of religious rites in the Congo and how the kettledrum is used by medicine men who time it with the heartbeat and then drum savage hearts into a frenzied spell. "How would this sort of thing work on an audience in the theater?" he wondered to himself. Finally the effect of the tropical forest was "honestly come by," as he has put it, for he had prospected for gold in Spanish Honduras.

There is your play. Out of these ideas, images and feelings of experience, which would mean for the ordinary man only an interesting rumination while smoking a pipe in the library by night, the artist creates "The Emperor Jones."

It were wise not to essay to trace in a foreword either dramatic effects or the means of their accomplishment, for discovery is only important

when it is made by oneself, that is to say, when it is made unaided. However, we marvel at the imaginative effect of this play in the theater. Jones, whom we admire in contrast with the sniveling meanness of the white Smithers, is the tragic victim of ancestral fear implanted deep in his own soul. What we actually seem to hear is the beating of his own heart; it palpitates in a devil's tattoo as his soul sheds the armor of civilization which had made him a king among the bush Negroes; finally there is exposed the naked soul of Africa, of voodoo, and out of the weird bluish mist of the river of fate, that fate which flows out of man's inner soul, approaches death.

The reader will miss the tom-tom of Jones's heart but he will be compensated by the settings of O'Neill's imagination, for no theater has yet reproduced the terrific imaginative quality of Scene VII except the theater of the reader's own imagination.

In his masterly theatricality the author does not stuff life into an arbitrary stage-pen, but expands his stage to embrace the whole murmurous sea of life; he enlarges the stage that it may contain his universe. He seems never to ask, Can this be

effectively staged? but only, Is this strong, true and dramatically possible on the stage of my own mind, my imagination?

“The Straw,” dated a year earlier, is well chosen to keep company with “The Emperor Jones” for the light which it will throw upon the author. He appears to have put himself, at least in one aspect, into the play in the character of Stephen Murray, just as Chekhov, for example, depicted himself as Trigorin in “The Sea Gull.” The reader must not expect these self-images which artists put into their works to jibe at all points; the artist sits occasionally before his mirror only to catch the outlines; imagination must not only fill in but create many features non-existent in the original. The author has said, “I have not written out of the top of my head, there is a background of real life behind my work.” Like Stephen Murray in the play, his lungs became affected and he spent six months in a sanatorium, Gaylord Farm in Connecticut, “thinking it over.”

Real life indeed lay behind him when he entered the sanatorium to “think it over.” He had hunted gold in Honduras, shipped on a Norwegian barque to Buenos Aires, tended mules in a cattle steamer

to South Africa, beachcombed in Brazil and New York, roomed with Chris Christopherson at Jimmy the Priest's on the Manhattan waterfront and shipped again on a liner for Southampton. In the sanatorium he first began to digest his crowded experience.

"It was in this enforced period of reflection," he has said, "that the urge to write first came to me. The next fall (I was twenty-four) I began my first play—The Web."

"The Straw" is dated 1919 and the only other plays bearing this or an earlier date are "Gold," "Beyond the Horizon," "Before Breakfast" and the single-act cycle of the sea. A young man wrote "The Straw," and we are sensible of the fact despite its truth and dramatic intensity. In the mature O'Neill life is cleansed of every trace of cant; it burns in him as fiercely clean and bright as an altar flame before a pagan god; but in the younger artist the flame had not yet completely eaten out those impurities stored in the fuel by a Pauline world, that life-warping environment of us all. And in "The Straw" we feel somehow that the author has not yet completely detached himself from Stephen Murray. For all that it is a fine

play, wringing the reader's heart with the tragic pathos at the end of Act II and deeply moving at its close.

Indeed the play closes but the drama does not; the curtain falls as Eileen is saying ". . . and—". There is always the straw. O'Neill knows that life and drama have no endings, only curtains.

Little need be said about his literary power. However, it should be borne in mind that he is no man of letters but an artist; no mere man of letters could write dialogue like this. Idiom is the living heart of language and O'Neill holds this heart in his two hands. There are times, especially in his later works, when all his words wear crowns, but if need be they can also blaspheme, wipe sweaty hands and blow lewd noses.

A man can hardly muse on O'Neill's development to his present age of forty without considering his relations with drama critics of his time. Not all of them have recognized that the poet can do anything he can do. The poet is hedged in by neither laws of art nor laws of nature, for even the laws of nature are made by the poets who stray in among the men of science. The poet has no imaginable barriers in the world outside himself; he

can do anything but he cannot be helped by his inferiors, and a critic must confess inferiority whatever he may profess among his friends, for every man had rather do a thing than talk about it however grandly.

The only beings who can help the artist are other artists whose works survive and all those ordinary people who crowd the planets, live, suffer and die as he passes through their midst. These two classes, the creative and the created, help the artist simply by passing into the bloodstream of his being.

Men who set up for critics constitute a third class and their duty to the artist, while immense, is not immediate. They are oculists and window cleaners for us all. Their immediate duty is to help us in our vision. While their eyes are focused on the creative, their voices must be pitched to the created, the masses whom they serve as window cleaners, making transparent to them those tradition-darkened panes of the cells in which they dwell, so that they may understand when new stars swim into their ken and may recognize, however dimly, those strange constellations remotely and gigantically wheeling in the sky. That this is a

high occupation is proven by the fact that every creative act in the life of the artist is a passionate endeavor to communicate his visions to these unnumbered fellows.

The weighers of works of art have sometimes amused posterity, not for the way they revealed artists but the way they revealed themselves. It is amusing now to turn back to the fulminations which Clement Scott in London and William Winter in New York once loosed against the indecency of Ibsen. The truth is that in the deepest sense, whether critic or creator, a man never writes about anybody but himself. Men who harp on the "morbid realism" of an artist are too frequently pinning the word upon themselves. Thus is the well man morbid in a sickly world and the realist feared in regions of unreality.

"When a man fails to understand something," said Chekhov, "he is conscious of a discord, and seeks the cause of it, not in himself, as he should, but outside himself— Hence the war with what he does not understand." That probes the canker in much contemporary criticism. Maxim Gorki relates how Chekhov said "with a wise smile":

"Critics are like horseflies which keep the horse

from ploughing. The horse works, all its muscles drawn tight like the strings on a double-bass, and a fly settles on his flanks and tickles and buzzes . . . The horse has to twitch his skin and swish his tail. And what does the fly buzz about? It scarcely knows itself; simply because it is restless and wants to proclaim, 'Look, I too am living on the earth. See, I can buzz too, buzz about anything.' . . . For twenty-five years I have read criticisms of my stories and I don't remember a single remark of any value or one word of valuable advice. Only once Skabichevski wrote something which made an impression on me. . . . He said I would die in a ditch, drunk."

However amusing, this smacks of raillery, and in any case O'Neill is a Pegasus who will never have occasion to be so caustic, for from the very start he has had the espousal of George Jean Nathan, the most commanding critical voice in the American theater.

At present writing O'Neill has turned forty and he has over fifteen plays of permanent value behind his name. He has gone on developing steadily, has showed no signs of writing dittoes. At each stage he goes deeper into life. This does not imply

that his early works are of little worth. In the beginning he struck out into the quiet tideways of man, but he never swam in safe and comfortable circles; he kept out and on out, until now he is off soundings, where both sea and sky have the azure color of eternity and wild gales come and go; he has swum far out to the mighty island of the Greeks.

The struggle of the drama always has been and will be man's struggle with his own fate. The Greeks, like all emerging men, stood in awe between two enigmatic worlds, that outer star-glamoured thunder-smiting cosmos of nature and the inner dream-haunted ghoulish-ridden cosmos of man's soul. They stood in awe as men between two unfathomable gulfs until their imaginations soothed their agitated hearts by peopling those gulfs with gods, majestic visions which made it possible for men of faith to live with a new joy which comprehended tragedy.

But the old dreams have been defaced and no longer pass current. The consciousness of man no longer stands with wonder-welling heart between two mystic worlds. Men sit in rocking chairs with smirking contentment between the multiplication

table and the moral law. New coinage, new dream-stamped currencies are required. It is to O'Neill and his kind that we must turn for hope of such a golden fortune as will bring this new joy of life, new vision of mystery, new comprehension of the eternal and cleansing tragedy of man.

DUDLEY NICHOLS.

New York
February, 1928

THE EMPEROR JONES

CHARACTERS

BRUTUS JONES *Emperor*
HENRY SMITHERS *A Cockney Trader*
AN OLD NATIVE WOMAN
LEM *A Native Chief*
SOLDIERS *Adherents of Lem*
The Little Formless Fears; Jeff; The Negro
Convicts; The Prison Guard; The
Planters; The Auctioneer; The Slaves;
The Congo Witch-Doctor; The Crocodile
God.

The action of the play takes place on an island in the West Indies as yet not self-determined by White Marines. The form of native government is, for the time being, an Empire.

SCENE ONE

SCENE—*The audience chamber in the palace of the Emperor—a spacious, high-ceilinged room with bare, white-washed walls. The floor is of white tiles. In the rear, to the left of center, a wide archway giving out on a portico with white pillars. The palace is evidently situated on high ground for beyond the portico nothing can be seen but a vista of distant hills, their summits crowned with thick groves of palm trees. In the right wall, center, a smaller arched doorway leading to the living quarters of the palace. The room is bare of furniture with the exception of one huge chair made of uncut wood which stands at center, its back to rear. This is very apparently the Emperor's throne. It is painted a dazzling, eye-smiting scarlet. There is a brilliant orange cushion on the seat and another smaller one is placed on the floor to serve as a footstool. Strips of matting, dyed scarlet, lead from the foot of the throne to the two entrances.*

It is late afternoon but the sunlight still blazes yellowly beyond the portico and there is an oppressive burden of exhausting heat in the air.

As the curtain rises, a native negro woman sneaks in cautiously from the entrance on the right. She is very old, dressed in cheap calico, bare-footed, a red bandana handkerchief covering all but a few stray wisps of white hair. A bundle bound in colored cloth is carried over her shoulder on the end of a stick. She hesitates beside the doorway, peering back as if in extreme dread of being discovered. Then she begins to glide noiselessly, a step at a time, toward the doorway in the rear. At this moment, SMITHERS appears beneath the portico.

SMITHERS is a tall, stoop-shouldered man about forty. His bald head, perched on a long neck with an enormous Adam's apple, looks like an egg. The tropics have tanned his naturally pasty face with its small, sharp features to a sickly yellow, and native rum has painted his pointed nose to a startling red. His little, washy-blue eyes are red-rimmed and dart about him like a ferret's. His expression is one of un-

scrupulous meanness, cowardly and dangerous. He is dressed in a worn riding suit of dirty white drill, puttees, spurs, and wears a white cork helmet. A cartridge belt with an automatic revolver is around his waist. He carries a riding whip in his hand. He sees the woman and stops to watch her suspiciously. Then, making up his mind, he steps quickly on tiptoe into the room. The woman, looking back over her shoulder continually, does not see him until it is too late. When she does SMITHERS springs forward and grabs her firmly by the shoulder. She struggles to get away, fiercely but silently.

SMITHERS [*Tightening his grasp—roughly*]: Easy! None o' that, me birdie. You can't wriggle out now. I got me 'ooks on yer.

WOMAN [*Seeing the uselessness of struggling, gives way to frantic terror, and sinks to the ground, embracing his knees supplicatingly*]: No tell him! No tell him, Mister!

SMITHERS [*With great curiosity*]: Tell 'im? [*Then scornfully.*] Oh, you mean 'is bloomin' Majesty. What's the gaime, any 'ow? What are you sneakin' away for? Been stealin' a bit, I s'pose. [*He taps her bundle with his riding whip significantly.*]

WOMAN [*Shaking her head vehemently*]: No, me no steal.

SMITHERS: Bloody liar! But tell me what's up. There's somethin' funny goin' on. I smelled it in the air first thing I got up this mornin'. You blacks are up to some devilment. This palace of 'is is like a bleedin' tomb. Where's all the 'ands? [*The woman keeps sullenly silent. SMITHERS raises his whip threateningly.*] Ow, yer won't, won't yer? I'll show yer what's what.

WOMAN [*Coweringly*]: I tell, Mister. You no hit. They go—all go. [*She makes a sweeping gesture toward the hills in the distance.*]

SMITHERS: Run away—to the 'ills?

WOMAN: Yes, Mister. Him Emperor—Great Father. [*She touches her forehead to the floor with a quick mechanical jerk.*] Him sleep after eat. Then they go—all go. Me old woman. Me left only. Now me go too.

SMITHERS [*His astonishment giving way to an immense, mean satisfaction*]: Ow! So that's the ticket! Well, I know bloody well wot's in the air—when they runs orf to the 'ills. The tom-tom 'll be thumping out there bloomin' soon. [*With extreme vindictiveness.*] And I'm bloody glad of it, for one!

Serve 'im right! Puttin' on airs, the stinkin' nigger! 'Is Majesty! Gawd blimey! I only 'opes I'm there when they takes 'im out to shoot 'im. [*Suddenly.*] 'E's still 'ere all right, ain't 'e?

WOMAN: Yes. Him sleep.

SMITHERS—'E's bound to find out soon as 'e wakes up. 'E's cunnin' enough to know when 'is time's come. [*He goes to the doorway on right and whistles shrilly with his fingers in his mouth. The old woman springs to her feet and runs out of the doorway, rear. SMITHERS goes after her, reaching for his revolver.*] Stop or I'll shoot! [*Then stopping—indifferently.*] Pop orf then, if yer like, yer black cow. [*He stands in the doorway, looking after her.*]

[JONES enters from the right. He is a tall, powerfully-built, full-blooded negro of middle age. His features are typically negroid, yet there is something decidedly distinctive about his face—an underlying strength of will, a hardy, self-reliant confidence in himself that inspires respect. His eyes are alive with a keen, cunning intelligence. In manner he is shrewd, suspicious, evasive. He wears a light blue uniform coat, sprayed with brass buttons, heavy gold chevrons on his shoulders,

gold braid on the collar, cuffs, etc. His pants are bright red with a light blue stripe down the side. Patent leather laced boots with brass spurs, and a belt with a long-barreled, pearl-handled revolver in a holster complete his make up. Yet there is something not altogether ridiculous about his grandeur. He has a way of carrying it off.]

JONES [*Not seeing anyone—greatly irritated and blinking sleepily—shouts*]: Who dare whistle dat way in my palace? Who dare wake up de Emperor? I'll git de hide fravled off some o' you niggers sho'!

SMITHERS [*Showing himself—in a manner half-afraid and half-defiant*]: It was me whistled to yer. [*As JONES frowns angrily.*] I got news for yer.

JONES [*Putting on his suavest manner, which fails to cover up his contempt for the white man*]: Oh, it's you, Mister Smithers. [*He sits down on his throne with easy dignity.*] What news you got to tell me?

SMITHERS [*Coming close to enjoy his discomfiture*]: Don't yer notice nothin' funny today?

JONES [*Coldly*]: Funny? No. I ain't perceived nothin' of de kind!

SMITHERS: Then yer ain't so foxy as I thought

yer was. Where's all your court? [*Sarcastically*] the Generals and the Cabinet Ministers and all?

JONES [*Imperturbably*]: Where dey mostly runs to minute I closes my eyes—drinkin' rum and talkin' big down in de town. [*Sarcastically.*] How come you don't know dat? Ain't you sousin' with 'em most every day?

SMITHERS [*Stung but pretending indifference—with a wink*]: That's part of the day's work. I got ter—ain't I—in my business?

JONES [*Contemptuously*]: Yo' business!

SMITHERS [*Imprudently enraged*]: Gawd blimey, you was glad enough for me ter take yer in on it when you landed here first. You didn' 'ave no 'igh and mighty airs in them days!

JONES [*His hand going to his revolver like a flash—menacingly*]: Talk polite, white man! Talk polite, you heah me! I'm boss heah now, is you fergettin'? [*The Cockney seems about to challenge this last statement with the facts but something in the other's eyes holds and coves him.*]

SMITHERS [*In a cowardly whine*]: No 'arm meant, old top.

JONES [*Condescendingly*]: I accepts yo' apology. [*Lets his hand fall from his revolver.*] No use'n you

rakin' up ole times. What I was den is one thing. What I is now 's another. You didn't let me in on yo' crooked work out o' no kind feelin's dat time. I done de dirty work fo' you—and most o' de brain work, too, fo' dat matter—and I was wu'th money to you, dat's de reason.

SMITHERS: Well, blimey, I give yer a start, didn't I—when no one else would. I wasn't afraid to 'ire yer like the rest was—'count of the story about your breakin' jail back in the States.

JONES: No, you didn't have no s'cuse to look down on me fo' dat. You been in jail you'self more'n once.

SMITHERS [*Furiously*]: It's a lie! [*Then trying to pass it off by an attempt at scorn.*] Garn! Who told yer that fairy tale?

JONES: Dey's some tings I ain't got to be tole. I kin see 'em in folk's eyes. [*Then after a pause—meditatively.*] Yes, you sho' give me a start. And it didn't take long from dat time to git dese fool, woods' niggers right where I wanted dem. [*With pride.*] From stowaway to Emperor in two years! Dat's goin' some!

SMITHERS [*With curiosity*]: And I bet you got yer pile o' money 'id safe some place.

JONES [*With satisfaction*]: I sho' has! And it's in a foreign bank where no pusson don't ever git it out but me no matter what come. You didn't s'pose I was holdin' down dis Emperor job for de glory in it, did you? Sho'! De fuss and glory part of it, dat's only to turn de heads o' de low-flung, bush niggers dat's here. Dey wants de big circus show for deir money. I gives it to 'em an' I gits de money. [*With a grin.*] De long green, dat's me every time! [*Then rebukingly.*] But you ain't got no kick agin me, Smithers. I'se paid you back all you done for me many times. Ain't I pertected you and winked at all de crooked tradin' you been doin' right out in de broad day. Sho' I has—and me makin' laws to stop it at de same time! [*He chuckles.*]

SMITHERS [*Grinning*]: But, meanin' no' 'arm, you been grabbin' right and left yourself, ain't yer? Look at the taxes you've put on 'em! Blimey! You've squeezed 'em dry!

JONES [*Chuckling*]: No, dey ain't *all* dry yet. I'se still heah, ain't I?

SMITHERS [*Smiling at his secret thought*]: They're dry right now, you'll find out. [*Changing the subject abruptly.*] And as for me breakin' laws, you've

broke 'em all yerself just as fast as yer made 'em.

JONES: Ain't I de Emperor? De laws don't go for him. [*Judicially.*] You heah what I tells you, Smithers. Dere's little stealin' like you does, and dere's big stealin' like I does. For de little stealin' dey gits you in jail soon or late. For de big stealin' dey makes you Emperor and puts you in de Hall o' Fame when you croaks. [*Reminiscently.*] If dey's one thing I learns in ten years on de Pullman ca's listenin' to de white quality talk, it's dat same fact. And when I gits a chance to use it I winds up Emperor in two years.

SMITHERS [*Unable to repress the genuine admiration of the small fry for the large*]: Yes, yer turned the bleedin' trick, all right. Blimey, I never seen a bloke 'as 'ad the bloomin' luck you 'as.

JONES [*Severely*]: Luck? What you mean—luck?

SMITHERS: I suppose you'll say as that swank about the silver bullet ain't luck—and that was what first got the fool blacks on yer side the time of the revolution, wasn't it?

JONES [*With a laugh*]: Oh, dat silver bullet! Sho' was luck! But I makes dat luck, you heah? I loads de dice! Yessuh! When dat murderin' nigger ole Lem hired to kill me takes aim ten feet away and

his gun misses fire and I shoots him dead, what you heah me say?

SMITHERS: You said yer'd got a charm so's no lead bullet'd kill yer. You was so strong only a silver bullet could kill yer, you told 'em. Blimey, wasn't that swank for yer—and plain, fat-'eaded luck?

JONES [*Proudly*]: I got brains and I uses 'em quick. Dat ain't luck.

SMITHERS: Yer know they wasn't 'ardly liable to get no silver bullets. And it was luck 'e didn't 'it you that time.

JONES [*Laughing*]: And dere all dem fool, bush niggers was kneelin' down and bumpin' deir heads on de ground like I was a miracle out o' de Bible. Oh Lawd, from dat time on I has dem all eatin' out of my hand. I cracks de whip and dey jumps through.

SMITHERS [*With a sniff*]: Yankee bluff done it.

JONES: Ain't a man's talkin' big what makes him big—long as he makes folks believe it? Sho', I talks large when I ain't got nothin' to back it up, but I ain't talkin' wild just de same. I knows I kin fool 'em—I *knows* it—and dat's backin' enough fo' my game. And ain't I got to learn deir lingo and teach

some of dem English befo' I kin talk to 'em? Ain't dat wuk? You ain't never learned ary word er it, Smithers, in de ten years you been heah, dough you' knows it's money in yo' pocket tradin' wid 'em if you does. But you'se too shiftless to take de trouble.

SMITHERS [*Flushing*]: Never mind about me. What's this I've 'eard about yer really 'avin' a silver bullet moulded for yourself?

JONES: It's playin' out my bluff. I has de silver bullet moulded and I tells 'em when de time comes I kills myself wid it. I tells 'em dat's 'cause I'm de on'y man in de world big enuff to git me. No use'n deir tryin'. And dey falls down and bumps deir heads. [*He laughs.*] I does dat so's I kin take a walk in peace widout no jealous nigger gunnin' at me from behind de trees.

SMITHERS [*Astonished*]: Then you 'ad it made—'onest?

JONES: Sho' did. Heah she be. [*He takes out his revolver, breaks it, and takes the silver bullet out of one chamber.*] Five lead an' dis silver baby at de last. Don't she shine pretty? [*He holds it in his hand, looking at it admiringly, as if strangely fascinated.*]

SMITHERS: Let me see. [*Reaches out his hand for it.*]

JONES [*Harshly*]: Keep yo' hands whar dey b'long, white man. [*He replaces it in the chamber and puts the revolver back on his hip.*]

SMITHERS [*Snarling*]: Gawd blimey! Think I'm a bleedin' thief, you would.

JONES: No, 'tain't dat. I knows you'se scared to steal from me. On'y I ain't 'lowin' nary body to touch dis baby. She's my rabbit's foot.

SMITHERS [*Sneering*]: A bloomin' charm, wot? [*Venomously.*] Well, you'll need all the bloody charms you 'as before long, s' 'elp me!

JONES [*Judicially*]: Oh, I'se good for six months yit 'fore dey gits sick o' my game. Den, when I sees trouble comin', I makes my getaway.

SMITHERS: Ho! You got it all planned, ain't yer?

JONES: I ain't no fool. I knows dis Emperor's time is sho't. Dat why I make hay when de sun shine. Was you thinkin' I'se aimin' to hold down dis job for life? No, suh! What good is gittin' money if you stays back in dis raggedy country? I wants action when I spends. And when I sees dese niggers gittin' up deir nerve to tu'n me out, and I'se

got all de money in sight, I resigns on de spot and beats it quick.

SMITHERS—Where to?

JONES—None o' yo' business.

SMITHERS: Not back to the bloody States, I'll lay my oath.

JONES [*Suspiciously*]: Why don't I? [*Then with an easy laugh.*] You mean 'count of dat story 'bout me breakin' from jail back dere? Dat's all talk.

SMITHERS [*Skeptically*]: Ho, yes!

JONES [*Sharply*]: You ain't 'sinuatin' I'se a liar, is you?

SMITHERS [*Hastily*]: No, Gawd strike me! I was only thinkin' o' the bloody lies you told the blacks 'ere about killin' white men in the States.

JONES [*Angered*]: How come dey're lies?

SMITHERS: You'd 'ave been in jail if you 'ad, wouldn't yer then? [*With venom.*] And from what I've 'eard, it ain't 'ealthy for a black to kill a white man in the States. They burns 'em in oil, don't they?

JONES [*With cool deadliness*]: You mean lynchin' 'd scare me? Well, I tells you, Smithers, maybe I does kill one white man back dere. Maybe I does.

And maybe I kills another right heah 'fore long if he don't look out.

SMITHERS [*Trying to force a laugh*]: I was on'y spoofin' yer. Can't yer take a joke? And you was just sayin' you'd never been in jail.

JONES [*In the same tone—slightly boastful*]: Maybe I goes to jail dere for gettin' in an argument wid razors ovah a crap game. Maybe I gits twenty years when dat colored man die. Maybe I gits in 'nother argument wid de prison guard was overseer ovah us when we're wukin' de roads. Maybe he hits me wid a whip and I splits his head wid a shovel and runs away and files de chain off my leg and gits away safe. Maybe I does all dat an' maybe I don't. It's a story I tells you so's you knows I'se de kind of man dat if you evah repeats one words of it, I ends yo' stealin' on dis yearth mighty damn quick!

SMITHERS [*Terrified*]: Think I'd peach on yer? Not me! Ain't I always been yer friend?

JONES [*Suddenly relaxing*]: Sho' you has—and you better be.

SMITHERS [*Recovering his composure—and with it his malice*]: And just to show yer I'm yer friend, I'll tell yer that bit o' news I was goin' to.

JONES: Go ahead! Shoot de piece. Must be bad news from de happy way you look.

SMITHERS [*Warningly*]: Maybe it's gettin' time for you to resign—with that bloomin' silver bullet, wot? [*He finishes with a mocking grin.*]

JONES [*Puzzled*]: What's dat you say? Talk plain.

SMITHERS: Ain't noticed any of the guards or servants about the place today, I 'aven't.

JONES [*Carelessly*]: Dey're all out in de garden sleepin' under de trees. When I sleeps, dey sneaks a sleep, too, and I pretends I never suspicions it. All I got to do is to ring de bell and dey come flyin', makin' a bluff dey was wukin' all de time.

SMITHERS [*In the same mocking tone*]: Ring the bell now an' you'll bloody well see what I means.

JONES [*Startled to alertness, but preserving the same careless tone*]: Sho' I rings. [*He reaches below the throne and pulls out a big, common dinner bell which is painted the same vivid scarlet as the throne. He rings this vigorously—then stops to listen. Then he goes to both doors, rings again, and looks out.*]

SMITHERS [*Watching him with malicious satisfaction, after a pause—mockingly*]: The bloody ship is sinkin' an' the bleedin' rats 'as slung their 'ooks.

JONES [*In a sudden fit of anger flings the bell*

clattering into a corner]: Low-flung, woods' niggers! [*Then catching Smithers' eye on him, he controls himself and suddenly bursts into a low chuckling laugh.*] Reckon I overplays my hand dis once! A man can't take de pot on a bob-tailed flush all de time. Was I sayin' I'd sit in six months mo'? Well, I'se changed my mind den. I cashes in and resigns de job of Emperor right dis minute.

SMITHERS [*With real admiration*]: Blimey, but you're a cool bird, and no mistake.

JONES: No use'n fussin'. When I knows de game's up I kisses it good-bye widout no long waits. Dey've all run off to de hills, ain't dey?

SMITHERS: Yes—every bleedin' man jack of 'em.

JONES: Den de revolution is at de post. And de Emperor better git his feet smokin' up de trail. [*He starts for the door in rear.*]

SMITHERS: Goin' out to look for your 'orse? Yer won't find any. They steals the 'orses first thing. Mine was gone when I went for 'im this mornin'. That's wot first give me a suspicion of wot was up.

JONES [*Alarmed for a second, scratches his head, then philosophically*]: Well, den I hoofs it. Feet, do yo' duty! [*He pulls out a gold watch and looks at it.*] Three-thuty. Sundown's at six-thuty or dere-

abouts. [*Puts his watch back—with cool confidence.*]
I got plenty o' time to make it easy.

SMITHERS: Don't be so bloomin' sure of it. They'll be after you 'ot and 'eavy. Ole Lem is at the bottom o' this business an' 'e 'ates you like 'ell. 'E'd rather do for you than eat 'is dinner, 'e would!

JONES [*Scornfully*]: Dat fool no-count nigger! Does you think I'se scared o' him? I stands him on his thick head more'n once befo' dis, and I does it again if he come in my way . . . [*Fiercely.*] And dis time I leave him a dead nigger fo' sho'!

SMITHERS: You'll 'ave to cut through the big forest—an' these blacks 'ere can sniff and follow a trail in the dark like 'ounds. You'd 'ave to 'ustle to get through that forest in twelve hours even if you knew all the bloomin' trails like a native.

JONES [*With indignant scorn*]: Look-a-heah, white man! Does you think I'se a natural bo'n fool? Give me credit fo' havin' some sense, fo' Lawd's sake! Don't you s'pose I'se looked ahead and made sho' of all de chances? I'se gone out in dat big forest, pretendin' to hunt, so many times dat I knows it high an' low like a book. I could go through on dem trails wid my eyes shut. [*With great contempt.*] Think dese ign'rent bush niggers

dat ain't got brains enuff to know deir own names even can catch Brutus Jones? Huh, I s'pects not! Not on yo' life! Why, man, de white men went after me wid bloodhounds where I come from an' I jes' laughs at 'em. It's a shame to fool dese black trash around heah, dey're so easy. You watch me, man'. I'll make dem look sick, I will. I'll be 'cross de plain to de edge of de forest by time dark comes. Once in de woods in de night, dey got a swell chance o' findin' dis baby! Dawn tomorrow I'll be out at de oder side and on de coast whar dat French gunboat is stayin'. She picks me up, take me to Martinique when she go dar, and dere I is safe wid a mighty big bankroll in my jeans. It's easy as rollin' off a log.

SMITHERS [*Maliciously*]: But s'posin' somethin' 'appens wrong an' they do nab yer?

JONES [*Decisively*]: Dey don't—dat's de answer.

SMITHERS: But, just for argyment's sake—what'd you do?

JONES [*Frowning*]: I'se got five lead bullets in dis gun good enuff fo' common bush niggers—and after dat I got de silver bullet left to cheat 'em out o' gittin' me.

SMITHERS [*Jeeringly*]: Ho, I was fergettin' that

silver bullet. You'll bump yourself orf in style, won't yer? Blimey!

JONES [*Gloomily*]: You kin bet yo' whole roll on one thing, white man. Dis baby plays out his string to de end and when he quits, he quits wid a bang de way he ought. Silver bullet ain't none too good for him when he go, dat's a fac'! [*Then shaking off his nervousness—with a confident laugh.*] Sho'! What is I talkin' about? Ain't come to dat yit and I never will—not wid trash niggers like dese yere. [*Boastfully.*] Silver bullet bring me luck anyway. I kin outguess, outrun, outfight, an' outplay de whole lot o' dem all ovah de board any time o' de day er night! You watch me! [*From the distant hills comes the faint, steady thump of a tom-tom, low and vibrating. It starts at a rate exactly corresponding to normal pulse beat—72 to the minute—and continues at a gradually accelerating rate from this point uninterruptedly to the very end of the play.*]

[JONES starts at the sound. A strange look of apprehension creeps into his face for a moment as he listens. Then he asks, with an attempt to regain his most casual manner.] What's dat drum beatin' fo'?

SMITHERS [*With a mean grin*]: For you. That

means the bleedin' ceremony 'as started. I've 'eard it before and I knows.

JONES: Cer'mony? What cer'mony?

SMITHERS: The blacks is 'oldin' a bloody meetin', 'avin' a war dance, gettin' their courage worked up b'fore they starts after you.

JONES: Let dem! Dey'll sho' need it!

SMITHERS: And they're there 'oldin' their 'eathen religious service—makin' no end of devil spells and charms to 'elp 'em against your silver bullet. [*He guffaws loudly.*] Blimey, but they're balmy as 'ell!

JONES [*A tiny bit awed and shaken in spite of himself*]: Huh! Takes more'n dat to scare dis chicken!

SMITHERS [*Scenting the other's feeling—maliciously*]: Ternight when it's pitch black in the forest, they'll 'ave their pet devils and ghosts 'oundin' after you. You'll find yer bloody 'air 'll be standin' on end before termorrow mornin'. [*Seriously.*] It's a bleedin' queer place, that stinkin' forest, even in daylight. Yer don't know what might 'appen in there, it's that rotten still. Always sends the cold shivers down my back minute I gets in it.

JONES [*With a contemptuous sniff*]: I ain't no chicken-liver like you is. Trees an' me, we'se friends, and dar's a full moon comin' bring me light. And let dem po' niggers make all de fool spells dey'se a min' to. Does yo' s'pect I'se silly enuff to b'lieve in ghosts an' ha'nts an' all dat ole woman's talk? G'long, white man! You ain't talkin' to me. [*With a chuckle.*] Doesn't you know dey's got to do wid a man was member in good standin' o' de Baptist Church? Sho' I was dat when I was porter on de Pullmans, befo' I gits into my little trouble. Let dem try deir heathen tricks. De Baptist Church done perfect me and land dem all in hell. [*Then with more confident satisfaction.*] And I'se got little silver bullet o' my own, don't forgit.

SMITHERS: Ho! You 'aven't give much 'eed to your Baptist Church since you been down 'ere. I've 'eard myself you 'ad turned yer coat an' was takin' up with their blarsted witch-doctors, or whatever the 'ell yer calls the swine.

JONES [*Vehemently*]: I pretends to! Sho' I pretends! Dat's part o' my game from de fust. If I finds out dem niggers believes dat black is white, den I yells it out louder 'n deir loudest. It don't git

me nothin' to do missionary work for de Baptist Church. I'se after de coin, an' I lays my Jesus on de shelf for de time bein'. [*Stops abruptly to look at his watch—alertly.*] But I ain't got de time to waste no more fool talk wid you. I'se gwine away from heah dis secon'. [*He reaches in under the throne and pulls out an expensive Panama hat with a bright multi-colored band and sets it jauntily on his head.*] So long, white man! [*With a grin.*] See you in jail sometime, maybe!

SMITHERS: Not me, you won't. Well, I wouldn't be in yer bloody boots for no bloomin' money, but 'ere's wishin' yer luck just the same.

JONES [*Contemptuously*]: You're de frightenedest man evah I see! I tells you I'se safe's 'f I was in New York City. It takes dem niggers from now to dark to git up de nerve to start somethin'. By dat time, I'se got a head start dey never kotch up wid.

SMITHERS [*Maliciously*]: Give my regards to any ghosts yer meets up with.

JONES [*Grinning*]: If dat ghost got money, I'll tell him never ha'nt you less'n he wants to lose it.

SMITHERS [*Flattered*]: Garn! [*Then curiously.*] Ain't yer takin' no luggage with yer?

JONES: I travels light when I wants to move fast.

And I got tinned grub buried on de edge o' de forest. [*Boastfully.*] Now say dat I don't look ahead an' use my brains! [*With a wide, liberal gesture.*] I will all dat's left in de palace to you—and you better grab all you kin sneak away wid befo' dey gits here.

SMITHERS [*Gratefully*]: Righto—and thanks ter yer. [*As JONES walks toward the door in rear—cautioningly.*] Say! Look 'ere, you ain't goin' out that way, are yer?

JONES: Does you think I'd slink out de back door like a common nigger? I'se Emperor yit, ain't I? And de Emperor Jones leaves de way he comes, and dat black trash don't dare stop him—not yit, leastways. [*He stops for a moment in the doorway, listening to the far-off but insistent beat of the tom-tom.*] Listen to dat roll-call, will you? Must be mighty big drum carry dat far. [*Then with a laugh.*] Well, if dey ain't no whole brass band to see me off, I sho' got de drum part of it. So long, white man. [*He puts his hands in his pockets and with studied carelessness, whistling a tune, he saunters out of the doorway and off to the left.*]

SMITHERS [*Looks after him with a puzzled admiration*]: 'E's got 'is bloomin' nerve with 'im,

s'elp me! [*Then angrily.*] Ho—the bleedin' nigger—puttin' on 'is bloody airs! I 'opes they nabs 'im an' gives 'im what's what! [*Then putting business before the pleasure of this thought, looking around him with cupidity.*] A bloke ought to find a 'ole lot in this palace that'd go for a bit of cash. Let's take a look, 'Arry, me lad. [*He starts for the doorway on right as*

[*The Curtain Falls.*]

SCENE TWO

SCENE—*Nightfall. The end of the plain where the Great Forest begins. The foreground is sandy, level ground dotted by a few stones and clumps of stunted bushes cowering close against the earth to escape the buffeting of the trade wind. In the rear the forest is a wall of darkness dividing the world. Only when the eye becomes accustomed to the gloom can the outlines of separate trunks of the nearest trees be made out, enormous pillars of deeper blackness. A somber monotone of wind lost in the leaves moans in the air. Yet this sound serves but to intensify the impression of the forest's relentless immobility, to form a background throwing into relief its brooding, implacable silence.*

[JONES enters from the left, walking rapidly. He stops as he nears the edge of the forest, looks around him quickly, peering into the dark as if searching for some familiar landmark. Then, apparently satisfied that he is where he ought to be, he throws himself on the ground, dog-tired.]

Well, heah I is. In de nick o' time, too! Little mo' an' it'd be blacker'n de ace of spades heahabouts. [*He pulls a bandana handkerchief from his hip pocket and mops off his perspiring face.*] Sho'! Gimme air! I'se tuckered out sho' 'nuff. Dat soft Emperor job ain't no trainin' for' a long hike ovah dat plain in de brilin' sun. [*Then with a chuckle.*] Cheah up, nigger, de worst is yet to come. [*He lifts his head and stares at the forest. His chuckle peters out abruptly. In a tone of awe.*] My goodness, look at dem woods, will you? Dat no-count Smithers said dey'd be black an' he sho' called de turn. [*Turning away from them quickly and looking down at his feet, he snatches at a chance to change the subject—solicitously.*] Feet, you is holdin' up yo' end fine an' I sutinly hopes you ain't blisterin' none. It's time you git a rest. [*He takes off his shoes, his eyes studiously avoiding the forest. He feels of the soles of his feet gingerly.*] You is still in de pink—on'y a little mite feverish. Cool yo'selfs. Remember you done got a long journey yit befo' you. [*He sits in a weary attitude, listening to the rhythmic beating of the tom-tom. He grumbles in a loud tone to cover up a growing uneasiness.*] Bush niggers! Wonder dey wouldn' git sick o' beatin' dat drum.

Sound louder, seem like. I wonder if dey's startin' after me? [*He scrambles to his feet, looking back across the plain.*] Couldn't see dem now, nohow, if dey was hundred feet away. [*Then shaking himself like a wet dog to get rid of these depressing thoughts.*] Sho', dey's miles an' miles behind. What you gittin' fidgety about? [*But he sits down and begins to lace up his shoes in great haste, all the time muttering reassuringly.*] You know what? Yo' belly is empty, dat's what's de matter wid you. Come time to eat! Wid nothin' but wind on yo' stumach, o' course you feels jiggedy. Well, we eats right heah an' now soon's I gits dese pesky shoes laced up! [*He finishes lacing up his shoes.*] Dere! Now le's see. [*Gets on his hands and knees and searches the ground around him with his eyes.*] White stone, white stone, where is you? [*He sees the first white stone and crawls to it—with satisfaction.*] Heah you is! I knowed dis was de right place. Box of grub, come to me. [*He turns over the stone and feels in under it—in a tone of dismay.*] Ain't heah! Gorry, is I in de right place or isn't I? Dere's 'nother stone. Guess dat's it. [*He scrambles to the next stone and turns it over.*] Ain't heah, neither! Grub, whar is you? Ain't heah. Gorry, has I got to go hungry into dem

woods—all de night? [*While he is talking he scrambles from one stone to another, turning them over in frantic haste. Finally, he jumps to his feet excitedly.*] Is I lost de place? Must have! But how dat happen when I was followin' de trail across de plain in broad daylight? [*Almost plaintively.*] I'se hungry, I is! I gotta git my feed. Whar's my strength gonna come from if I doesn't? Gorry, I gotta find dat grub high an' low somehow! Why it come dark so quick like dat? Can't see nothin'. [*He scratches a match on his trousers and peers about him. The rate of the beat of the far-off tom-tom increases perceptibly as he does so. He mutters in a bewildered voice.*] How come all dese white stones come heah when I only remembers one? [*Suddenly, with a frightened gasp, he flings the match on the ground and stamps on it.*] Nigger, is you gone crazy mad? Is you lightin' matches to show dem whar you is? Fo' Lawd's sake, use yo' haid. Gorry, I'se got to be careful! [*He stares at the plain behind him apprehensively, his hand on his revolver.*] But how come all dese white stones? And whar's dat tin box o' grub I hid all wrapped up in oil cloth?

[*While his back is turned, the LITTLE FORMLESS FEARS creep out from the deeper blackness of the for-*

est. They are black, shapeless, only their glittering little eyes can be seen. If they have any describable form at all it is that of a grubworm about the size of a creeping child. They move noiselessly, but with deliberate, painful effort, striving to raise themselves on end, failing and sinking prone again. JONES turns about to face the forest. He stares up at the tops of the trees, seeking vainly to discover his whereabouts by their conformation.]

Can't tell nothin' from dem trees! Gorry, nothin' 'round heah look like I evah seed it befo'. I'se done lost de place sho' 'nuff! [*With mournful foreboding.*] It's mighty queer! It's mighty queer! [*With sudden forced defiance—in an angry tone.*] Woods, is you tryin' to put somethin' ovah on me?

[*From the formless creatures on the ground in front of him comes a tiny gale of low mocking laughter like a rustling of leaves. They squirm upward toward him in twisted attitudes. JONES looks down, leaps backward with a yell of terror, yanking out his revolver as he does so—in a quavering voice.*] What's dat? Who's dar? What is you? Git away from me befo' I shoots you up! You don't? . . .

[*He fires. There is a flash, a loud report, then silence broken only by the far-off, quickened throb of*

the tom-tom. The formless creatures have scurried back into the forest. JONES remains fixed in his position, listening intently. The sound of the shot, the reassuring feel of the revolver in his hand, have somewhat restored his shaken nerve. He addresses himself with renewed confidence.]

Dey're gone. Dat shot fix 'em. Dey was only little animals—little wild pigs, I reckon. Dey've maybe rooted out yo' grub an' eat it. Sho', you fool nigger, what you think dey is—ha'nts? [*Excitedly.*] Gorry, you give de game away when you fire dat shot. Dem niggers heah dat fo' su'tin! Time you beat it in de woods widout no long waits. [*He starts for the forest—hesitates before the plunge—then urging himself in with manful resolution.*] Git in, nigger! What you skeered at? Ain't nothin' dere but de trees! Git in! [*He plunges boldly into the forest.*]

SCENE THREE

SCENE—*Nine o'clock. In the forest. The moon has just risen. Its beams, drifting through the canopy of leaves, make a barely perceptible, suffused, eerie glow. A dense low wall of underbrush and creepers is in the nearer foreground, fencing in a small triangular clearing. Beyond this is the massed blackness of the forest like an encompassing barrier. A path is dimly discerned leading down to the clearing from left, rear, and winding away from it again toward the right. As the scene opens nothing can be distinctly made out. Except for the beating of the tom-tom, which is a trifle louder and quicker than in the previous scene, there is silence, broken every few seconds by a queer, clicking sound. Then gradually the figure of the negro, JEFF, can be discerned crouching on his haunches at the rear of the triangle. He is middle-aged, thin, brown in color, is dressed in a Pullman porter's uniform, cap, etc. He is throwing a pair of dice on the ground before him,*

picking them up, shaking them, casting them out with the regular, rigid, mechanical movements of an automaton. The heavy, plodding footsteps of someone approaching along the trail from the left are heard and JONES' voice, pitched in a slightly higher key and strained in a cheering effort to overcome its own tremors.

De moon's rizen. Does you heah dat, nigger? You gits more light from dis out. No mo' buttin' yo' fool head agin' de trunks an' scratchin' de hide off yo' legs in de bushes. Now you sees whar yo'se gwine. So cheer up! From now on you has a snap. [*He steps just to the rear of the triangular clearing and mops off his face on his sleeve. He has lost his Panama hat. His face is scratched, his brilliant uniform shows several large rents.*] What time's it gittin' to be, I wonder? I dassent light no match to find out. Phoo'. It's wa'm an' dat's a fac'! [*Wearily.*] How long I been makin' tracks in dese woods? Must be hours an' hours. Seems like fo'evah! Yit can't be, when de moon's jes' riz. Dis am a long night fo' yo', yo' Majesty! [*With a mournful chuckle.*] Majesty! Der ain't much majesty 'bout dis baby now. [*With attempted cheerfulness.*] Never min'. It's all part o' de game. Dis night come to an

end like everything else. And when you gits dar safe and has dat bankroll in yo' hands you laughs at all dis. [*He starts to whistle but checks himself abruptly.*] What yo' whistlin' for, you po' dope! Want all de worl' to heah you? [*He stops talking to listen.*] Heah dat ole drum! Sho' gits nearer from de sound. Dey're packin' it along wid 'em. Time fo' me to move. [*He takes a step forward, then stops—worriedly.*] What's dat odder queer clickety sound I heah? Dere it is! Sound close! Sound like—sound like—Fo' God sake, sound like some nigger was shootin' crap! [*Frightenedly.*] I better beat it quick when I gits dem notions. [*He walks quickly into the clear space—then stands transfixed as he sees JEFF—in a terrified gasp.*] Who dar? Who dat? Is dat you, Jeff? [*Starting toward the other, forgetful for a moment of his surroundings and really believing it is a living man that he sees—in a tone of happy relief.*] Jeff! I'se sho' mighty glad to see you! Dey tol' me you done died from dat razor cut I gives you. [*Stopping suddenly, bewilderedly.*] But how you come to be heah, nigger? [*He stares fascinatedly at the other who continues his mechanical play with the dice. JONES' eyes begin to roll wildly. He stutters.*] Ain't you gwine—look up—can't you speak to me?

Is you—is you—a ha'nt? [*He jerks out his revolver in a frenzy of terrified rage.*] Nigger, I kills you dead once. Has I got to kill you agin? You take it den. [*He fires. When the smoke clears away JEFF has disappeared. JONES stands trembling—then with a certain reassurance.*] He's gone, anyway. Ha'nt or no ha'nt, dat shot fix him. [*The beat of the far-off tom-tom is perceptibly louder and more rapid. JONES becomes conscious of it—with a start, looking back over his shoulder.*] Dey's gittin' near! Dey'se comin' fast! And heah I is shootin' shots to let 'em know jes' whar I is. Oh, Gorry, I'se got to run. [*Forgetting the path he plunges wildly into the underbrush in the rear and disappears in the shadow.*]

SCENE FOUR

SCENE—*Eleven o'clock. In the forest. A wide dirt road runs diagonally from right, front, to left, rear. Rising sheer on both sides the forest walls it in. The moon is now up. Under its light the road glimmers ghastly and unreal. It is as if the forest had stood aside momentarily to let the road pass through and accomplish its veiled purpose. This done, the forest will fold in upon itself again and the road will be no more. JONES stumbles in from the forest on the right. His uniform is ragged and torn. He looks about him with numbed surprise when he sees the road, his eyes blinking in the bright moonlight. He flops down exhaustedly and pants heavily for a while. Then with sudden anger.*

I'm meltin' wid heat! Runnin' an' runnin' an' runnin'! Damn dis heah coat! Like a strait jacket! [*He tears off his coat and flings it away from him, revealing himself stripped to the waist.*] Dere! Dat's better! Now I kin breathe! [*Looking down at his feet, the spurs catch his eye.*] And to hell wid dese

high-fangled spurs. Dey're what's been a-trippin' me up an' breakin' my neck. [*He unstraps them and flings them away disgustedly.*] Dere! I gits rid o' dem frippety Emperor trappin's an' I travels lighter. Lawd! I'se tired! [*After a pause, listening to the insistent beat of the tom-tom in the distance.*] I must 'a put some distance between myself an' dem—runnin' like dat—and yit—dat damn drum sound jes' de same—nearer, even. Well, I guess I a'most holds my lead anyhow. Dey won't never catch up. [*With a sigh.*] If on'y my fool legs stands up. Oh, I'se sorry I evah went in for dis. Dat Emperor job is sho' hard to shake. [*He looks around him suspiciously.*] How'd dis road evah git heah? Good level road, too. I never remembers seein' it befo'. [*Shaking his head apprehensively.*] Dese woods is sho' full o' de queerest things at night. [*With a sudden terror.*] Lawd God, don't let me see no more o' dem ha'nts! Dey gits my goat! [*Then trying to talk himself into confidence.*] Ha'nts! You fool nigger, dey ain't no such things! Don't de Baptist parson tell you dat many time? Is you civilized, or is you like dese ign'rent black niggers heah? Sho'! Dat was all in yo' own head. Wasn't nothin' dere. Wasn't no Jeff! Know what? You

jus' get seein' dem things 'cause yo' belly's empty and you's sick wid hunger inside. Hunger 'fects yo' head and yo' eyes. Any fool know dat. [*Then pleading fervently.*] But bless God, I don't come across no more o' dem, whatever dey is! [*Then cautiously.*] Rest! Don't talk! Rest! You needs it. Den you gits on yo' way again. [*Looking at the moon.*] Night's half gone a'most. You hits de coast in de mawning! Den you'se all safe.

[From the right forward a small gang of negroes enter. They are dressed in striped convict suits, their heads are shaven, one leg drags limpingly, shackled to a heavy ball and chain. Some carry picks, the others shovels. They are followed by a white man dressed in the uniform of a prison guard. A Winchester rifle is slung across his shoulders and he carries a heavy whip. At a signal from the GUARD they stop on the road opposite where JONES is sitting. JONES, who has been staring up at the sky, unmindful of their noiseless approach, suddenly looks down and sees them. His eyes pop out, he tries to get to his feet and fly, but sinks back, too numbed by fright to move. His voice catches in a choking prayer.]

Lawd Jesus!

[The PRISON GUARD cracks his whip—noiselessly

—and at that signal all the convicts start to work on the road. They swing their picks, they shovel, but not a sound comes from their labor. Their movements, like those of JEFF in the preceding scene, are those of automatons,—rigid, slow, and mechanical. The PRISON GUARD points sternly at JONES with his whip, motions him to take his place among the other shovelers. JONES gets to his feet in a hypnotized stupor. He mumbles subserviently.]

Yes, suh! Yes, suh! I'se comin'.

[As he shuffles, dragging one foot, over to his place, he curses under his breath with rage and hatred.]

God damn yo' soul, I gits even wid you yit, sometime.

[As if there were a shovel in his hands he goes through weary, mechanical gestures of digging up dirt, and throwing it to the roadside. Suddenly the GUARD approaches him angrily, threateningly. He raises his whip and lashes JONES viciously across the shoulders with it. JONES winces with pain and cowers abjectly. The GUARD turns his back on him and walks away contemptuously. Instantly JONES straightens up. With arms upraised as if his shovel were a club in his hands he springs murderously at the unsuspecting GUARD. In the act of crashing

down his shovel on the white man's skull, JONES suddenly becomes aware that his hands are empty. He cries despairingly.]

Whar's my shovel? Gimme my shovel 'till I splits his damn head! [*Appealing to his fellow convicts.*] Gimme a shovel, one o' you, fo' God's sake!

[They stand fixed in motionless attitudes, their eyes on the ground. The GUARD seems to wait expectantly, his back turned to the attacker. JONES bellows with baffled, terrified rage, tugging frantically at his revolver.]

I kills you, you white debil, if it's de last thing I evah does! Ghost or debil, I kill you agin!

[He frees the revolver and fires point blank at the GUARD's back. Instantly the walls of the forest close in from both sides, the road and the figures of the convict gang are blotted out in an enshrouding darkness. The only sounds are a crashing in the underbrush as JONES leaps away in mad flight and the throbbing of the tom-tom, still far distant, but increased in volume of sound and rapidity of beat.]

SCENE FIVE

SCENE—*One o'clock. A large circular clearing, enclosed by the serried ranks of gigantic trunks of tall trees whose tops are lost to view. In the center is a big dead stump worn by time into a curious resemblance to an auction block. The moon floods the clearing with a clear light. JONES forces his way in through the forest on the left. He looks wildly about the clearing with hunted, fearful glances. His pants are in tatters, his shoes cut and misshapen, flapping about his feet. He slinks cautiously to the stump in the center and sits down in a tense position, ready for instant flight. Then he holds his head in his hands and rocks back and forth, moaning to himself miserably.]*

Oh Lawd, Lawd! Oh Lawd, Lawd! [*Suddenly he throws himself on his knees and raises his clasped hands to the sky—in a voice of agonized pleading.*]
Lawd Jesus, heah my prayer! I'se a po' sinner, a po' sinner! I knows I done wrong, I knows it! When I cotches Jeff cheatin' wid loaded dice my

anger overcomes me and I kills him dead! Lawd, I done wrong! When dat guard hits me wid de whip, my anger overcomes me, and I kills him dead. Lawd, I done wrong! And down heah whar dese fool bush niggers raises me up to the seat o' de mighty, I steals all I could grab. Lawd, I done wrong! I knows it! I'se sorry! Forgive me, Lawd! Forgive dis po' sinner! [*Then beseeching terrifiedly.*] And keep dem away, Lawd! Keep dem away from me! And stop dat drum soundin' in my ears! Dat begin to sound ha'nted, too. [*He gets to his feet, evidently slightly reassured by his prayer—with attempted confidence.*] De Lawd'll preserve me from dem ha'nts after dis. [*Sits down on the stump again.*] I ain't skeered o' real men. Let dem come. But dem odders . . . [*He shudders—then looks down at his feet, working his toes inside the shoes—with a groan.*] Oh, my po' feet! Dem shoes ain't no use no more 'ceptin' to hurt. I'se better off widout dem. [*He unlaces them and pulls them off—holds the wrecks of the shoes in his hands and regards them mournfully.*] You was real, A-one patin' leather, too. Look at you now. Emperor, you'se gittin' mighty low!

[*He sits dejectedly and remains with bowed*

shoulders, staring down at the shoes in his hands as if reluctant to throw them away. While his attention is thus occupied, a crowd of figures silently enter the clearing from all sides. All are dressed in Southern costumes of the period of the fifties of the last century. There are middle-aged men who are evidently well-to-do planters. There is one spruce, authoritative individual—the AUCTIONEER. There is a crowd of curious spectators, chiefly young belles and dandies who have come to the slave-market for diversion. All exchange courtly greetings in dumb show and chat silently together. There is something stiff, rigid, unreal, marionettish about their movements. They group themselves about the stump. Finally a batch of slaves are led in from the left by an attendant—three men of different ages, two women, one with a baby in her arms, nursing. They are placed to the left of the stump, beside JONES.

The white planters look them over appraisingly as if they were cattle, and exchange judgments on each. The dandies point with their fingers and make witty remarks. The belles titter bewitchingly. All this in silence save for the ominous throb of the tom-tom. The AUCTIONEER holds up his hand, taking his place at the stump. The groups strain forward attentively. He

touches JONES on the shoulder peremptorily, motioning for him to stand on the stump—the auction block.

JONES looks up, sees the figures on all sides, looks wildly for some opening to escape, sees none, screams and leaps madly to the top of the stump to get as far away from them as possible. He stands there, cowering, paralyzed with horror. The AUCTIONEER begins his silent spiel. He points to JONES, appeals to the planters to see for themselves. Here is a good field hand, sound in wind and limb as they can see. Very strong still in spite of his being middle-aged. Look at that back. Look at those shoulders. Look at the muscles in his arms and his sturdy legs. Capable of any amount of hard labor. Moreover, of a good disposition, intelligent and tractable. Will any gentleman start the bidding? The PLANTERS raise their fingers, make their bids. They are apparently all eager to possess JONES. The bidding is lively, the crowd interested. While this has been going on, JONES has been seized by the courage of desperation. He dares to look down and around him. Over his face abject terror gives way to mystification, to gradual realization—stutteringly.]

What you all doin', white folks? What's all dis?
What you all lookin' at me fo'? What you doin'?

wid me, anyhow? [*Suddenly convulsed with raging hatred and fear.*] Is dis a auction? Is you sellin' me like dey uster befo' de war? [*Jerking out his revolver just as the AUCTIONEER knocks him down to one of the planters—glaring from him to the purchaser.*] And you sells me? And you buys me? I shows you I'se a free nigger, damn yo' souls! [*He fires at the AUCTIONEER and at the PLANTER with such rapidity that the two shots are almost simultaneous. As if this were a signal the walls of the forest fold in. Only blackness remains and silence broken by JONES as he rushes off, crying with fear—and by the quickened, ever louder beat of the tom-tom.*]

SCENE SIX

SCENE—*Three o'clock. A cleared space in the forest.*

The limbs of the trees meet over it forming a low ceiling about five feet from the ground. The interlocked ropes of creepers reaching upward to entwine the tree trunks give an arched appearance to the sides. The space thus enclosed is like the dark, noisome hold of some ancient vessel. The moonlight is almost completely shut out and only a vague, wan light filters through. There is the noise of someone approaching from the left, stumbling and crawling through the undergrowth. JONES' voice is heard between chattering moans.

Oh, Lawd, what I gwine do now? Ain't got no bullet left on'y de silver one. If mo' o' dem ha'nts come after me, how I gwine skeer dem away? Oh, Lawd, on'y de silver one left—an' I gotta save dat fo' luck. If I shoots dat one I'm a goner sho'! Lawd, it's black heah! Whar's de moon? Oh, Lawd, don't dis night evah come to an end? [*By the sounds, he is feeling his way cautiously forward.*] Dere! Dis feels

like a clear space. I gotta lie down an' rest. I don't care if dem niggers does cotch me. I gotta rest.

[He is well forward now where his figure can be dimly made out. His pants have been so torn away that what is left of them is no better than a breech cloth. He flings himself full length, face downward on the ground, panting with exhaustion. Gradually it seems to grow lighter in the enclosed space and two rows of seated figures can be seen behind JONES. They are sitting in crumpled, despairing attitudes, hunched, facing one another with their backs touching the forest walls as if they were shackled to them. All are negroes, naked save for loin cloths. At first they are silent and motionless. Then they begin to sway slowly forward toward each and back again in unison, as if they were laxly letting themselves follow the long roll of a ship at sea. At the same time, a low, melancholy murmur rises among them, increasing gradually by rhythmic degrees which seem to be directed and controlled by the throb of the tom-tom in the distance, to a long, tremulous wail of despair that reaches a certain pitch, unbearably acute, then falls by slow gradations of tone into silence and is taken up again. JONES starts, looks up, sees the figures, and throws himself down again to shut out the sight. A

shudder of terror shakes his whole body as the wail rises up about him again. But the next time, his voice, as if under some uncanny compulsion, starts with the others. As their chorus lifts he rises to a sitting posture similar to the others, swaying back and forth. His voice reaches the highest pitch of sorrow, of desolation. The light fades out, the other voices cease, and only darkness is left. JONES can be heard scrambling to his feet and running off, his voice sinking down the scale and receding as he moves farther and farther away in the forest. The tom-tom beats louder, quicker, with a more insistent, triumphant pulsation.]

SCENE SEVEN

SCENE—*Five o'clock. The foot of a gigantic tree by the edge of a great river. A rough structure of boulders, like an altar, is by the tree. The raised river bank is in the nearer background. Beyond this the surface of the river spreads out, brilliant and unruffled in the moonlight, blotted out and merged into a veil of bluish mist in the distance. JONES' voice is heard from the left rising and falling in the long, despairing wail of the chained slaves, to the rhythmic beat of the tom-tom. As his voice sinks into silence, he enters the open space. The expression of his face is fixed and stony, his eyes have an obsessed glare, he moves with a strange deliberation like a sleep-walker or one in a trance. He looks around at the tree, the rough stone altar, the moonlit surface of the river beyond, and passes his hand over his head with a vague gesture of puzzled bewilderment. Then, as if in obedience to some obscure impulse, he sinks into a kneeling, devotional posture before the altar. Then he seems to*

come to himself partly, to have an uncertain realization of what he is doing, for he straightens up and stares about him horrifiedly—in an incoherent mumble.

What—what is I doin? What is—dis place? Seems like—seems like I know dat tree—an' dem stones—an' de river. I remember—seems like I been heah befo'. [*Tremblingly.*] Oh, Gorry, I'se skeered in dis place! I'se skeered! Oh, Lawd, perfect dis sinner!

[Crawling away from the altar, he cowers close to the ground, his face hidden, his shoulders heaving with sobs of hysterical fright. From behind the trunk of the tree, as if he had sprung out of it, the figure of the CONGO WITCH-DOCTOR appears. He is wizened and old, naked except for the fur of some small animal tied about his waist, its bushy tail hanging down in front. His body is stained all over a bright red. Antelope horns are on each side of his head, branching upward. In one hand he carries a bone rattle, in the other a charm stick with a bunch of white cockatoo feathers tied to the end. A great number of glass beads and bone ornaments are about his neck, ears, wrists, and ankles. He struts noiselessly with a queer prancing step to a position in the clear ground between

JONES and the altar. Then with a preliminary, summoning stamp of his foot on the earth, he begins to dance and to chant. As if in response to his summons the beating of the tom-tom grows to a fierce, exultant boom whose throbs seem to fill the air with vibrating rhythm. JONES looks up, starts to spring to his feet, reaches a half-kneeling, half-squatting position and remains rigidly fixed there, paralyzed with awed fascination by this new apparition. The WITCH-DOCTOR sways, stamping with his foot, his bone rattle clicking the time. His voice rises and falls in a weird, monotonous croon, without articulate word divisions. Gradually his dance becomes clearly one of a narrative in pantomime, his croon is an incantation, a charm to allay the fierceness of some implacable deity demanding sacrifice. He flees, he is pursued by devils, he hides, he flees again. Ever wilder and wilder becomes his flight, nearer and nearer draws the pursuing evil, more and more the spirit of terror gains possession of him. His croon, rising to intensity, is punctuated by shrill cries. JONES has become completely hypnotized. His voice joins in the incantation, in the cries, he beats time with his hands and sways his body to and fro from the waist. The whole spirit and meaning of the dance has entered

into him, has become his spirit. Finally the theme of the pantomime halts on a howl of despair, and is taken up again in a note of savage hope. There is a salvation. The forces of evil demand sacrifice. They must be appeased. The WITCH-DOCTOR points with his wand to the sacred tree, to the river beyond, to the altar, and finally to JONES with a ferocious command. JONES seems to sense the meaning of this. It is he who must offer himself for sacrifice. He beats his forehead abjectly to the ground, moaning hysterically.]

Mercy, Oh Lawd! Mercy! Mercy on dis po' sinner.

[The WITCH-DOCTOR springs to the river bank. He stretches out his arms and calls to some God within its depths. Then he starts backward slowly, his arms remaining out. A huge head of a crocodile appears over the bank and its eyes, glittering greenly, fasten upon JONES. He stares into them fascinatedly. The WITCH-DOCTOR prances up to him, touches him with his wand, motions with hideous command toward the waiting monster. JONES squirms on his belly nearer and nearer, moaning continually.]

Mercy, Lawd! Mercy!

[The crocodile heaves more of his enormous hulk

onto the land. JONES squirms toward him. The WITCH-DOCTOR'S voice shrills out in furious exultation, the tom-tom beats madly. JONES cries out in a fierce, exhausted spasm of anguished pleading.]

Lawd, save me! Lawd Jesus, heah my prayer!

[Immediately, in answer to his prayer, comes the thought of the one bullet left him. He snatches at his hip, shouting defiantly.]

De silver bullet! You don't git me yit!

[He fires at the green eyes in front of him. The head of the crocodile sinks back behind the river bank, the WITCH-DOCTOR springs behind the sacred tree and disappears. JONES lies with his face to the ground, his arms outstretched, whimpering with fear as the throb of the tom-tom fills the silence about him with a somber pulsation, a baffled but revengeful power.]

SCENE EIGHT

SCENE—*Dawn. Same as Scene Two, the dividing line of forest and plain. The nearest tree trunks are dimly revealed but the forest behind them is still a mass of glooming shadow. The tom-tom seems on the very spot, so loud and continuously vibrating are its beats. LEM enters from the left, followed by a small squad of his soldiers, and by the Cockney trader, SMITHERS. LEM is a heavy-set, ape-faced old savage of the extreme African type, dressed only in a loin cloth. A revolver and cartridge belt are about his waist. His soldiers are in different degrees of rag-concealed nakedness. All wear broad palm-leaf hats. Each one carries a rifle. SMITHERS is the same as in Scene One. One of the soldiers, evidently a tracker, is peering about keenly on the ground. He grunts and points to the spot where JONES entered the forest. LEM and SMITHERS come to look.*

SMITHERS [*After a glance, turns away in disgust*]:
That's where 'e went in right enough. Much good it'll do yer. 'E's miles orf by this an' safe to the Coast, damn 'is 'ide! I tole yer yer'd lose 'im, didn't

I?—wastin' the 'ole bloomin' night beatin' yer bloody drum and castin' yer silly spells! Gawd blimey, wot a pack!

LEM [*Gutturally*]: We cotch him. You see. [*He makes a motion to his soldiers who squat down on their haunches in a semicircle.*]

SMITHERS [*Exasperatedly*]: Well, ain't yer goin' in an' 'unt 'im in the woods? What the 'ell's the good of waitin'?

LEM [*Imperturbably—squatting down himself*]: We cotch him.

SMITHERS [*Turning away from him contemptuously*]: Aw! Garn! 'E's a better man than the lot o' you put together. I 'ates the sight o' 'im but I'll say that for 'im. [*A sound of snapping twigs comes from the forest. The soldiers jump to their feet, cocking their rifles alertly. LEM remains sitting with an imperturbable expression, but listening intently. The sound from the woods is repeated. LEM makes a quick signal with his hand. His followers creep quickly but noiselessly into the forest, scattering so that each enters at a different spot.*]

SMITHERS [*In the silence that follows—in a contemptuous whisper*]: You ain't thinkin' that would be 'im, I 'ope?

LEM [*Calmly*]: We cotch him.

SMITHERS: Blarsted fat 'eads! [*Then after a second's thought—wonderingly.*] Still an' all, it might 'appen. If 'e lost 'is bloody way in these stinkin' woods 'e'd likely turn in a circle without 'is knowin' it. They all does.

LEM [*Peremptorily*]: Sssh! [*The reports of several rifles sound from the forest, followed a second later by savage, exultant yells. The beating of the tom-tom abruptly ceases. LEM looks up at the white man with a grin of satisfaction.*] We cotch him. Him dead.

SMITHERS [*With a snarl*]: 'Ow d'yer know it's 'im an' 'ow d'yer know 'e's dead?

LEM: My mens dey got 'um silver bullets. Dey kill him shore.

SMITHERS [*Astonished*]: They got silver bullets?

LEM: Lead bullet no kill him. He got um strong charm. I cook um money, make um silver bullet, make um strong charm, too.

SMITHERS [*Light breaking upon him*]: So that's wot you was up to all night, wot? You was scared to put after 'im till you'd molded silver bullets, eh?

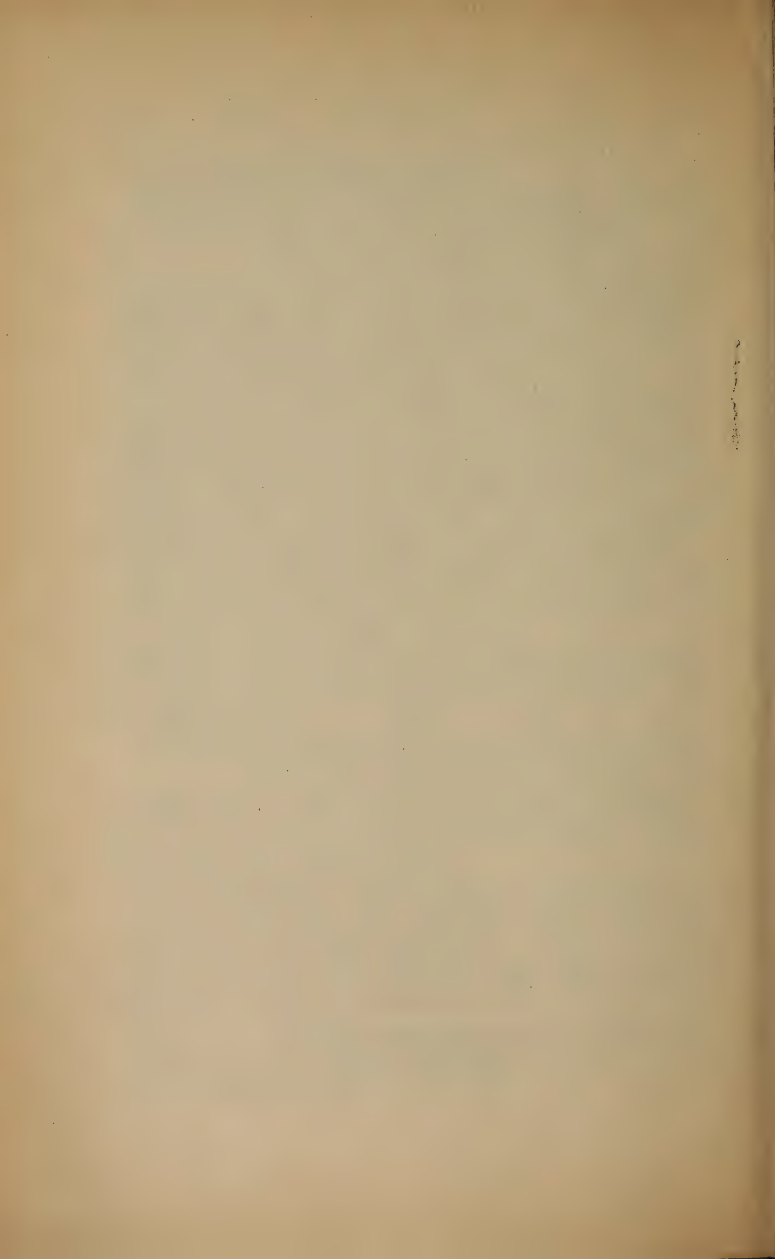
LEM [*Simply stating a fact*]: Yes. Him got strong charm. Lead no good.

SMITHERS [*Slapping his thigh and guffawing*]: Haw-haw! If yer don't beat all 'ell! [*Then recovering himself—scornfully.*] I'll bet yer it ain't 'im they shot at all, yer bleedin' looney!

LEM [*Calmly*]: Dey come bring him now. [*The soldiers come out of the forest, carrying JONES' limp body. There is a little reddish-purple hole under his left breast. He is dead. They carry him to LEM, who examines his body with great satisfaction. SMITHERS leans over his shoulder—in a tone of frightened awe.*] Well, they did for yer right enough, Jonsey, me lad! Dead as a 'erring! [*Mockingly.*] Where's yer 'igh an' mighty airs now, yer bloomin' Majesty? [*Then with a grin.*] Silver bullets! Gawd blimey, but yer died in the 'eighth o' style, any'ow! [LEM makes a motion to the soldiers to carry the body out left. SMITHERS speaks to him sneeringly.]

SMITHERS: And I s'pose you think it's yer bleedin' charms and yer silly beatin' the drum that made 'im run in a circle when 'e'd lost 'imself, don't yer? [*But LEM makes no reply, does not seem to hear the question, walks out left after his men. SMITHERS looks after him with contemptuous scorn.*] Stupid as 'ogs, the lot of 'em! Blarsted niggers!

[*Curtain Falls.*]



THE STRAW

CHARACTERS

BILL CARMODY

MARY

NORA

TOM

BILLY

} *his children*

DOCTOR GAYNOR,

FRED NICHOLLS,

EILEEN CARMODY, *Bill's eldest child*

STEPHEN MURRAY,

MISS HOWARD, *a nurse in training*

MISS GILPIN, *superintendent of the Infirmary*

DOCTOR STANTON, *of the Hill Farm Sanatorium*

DOCTOR SIMMS, *his assistant*

MR. SLOAN,

PETERS, *a patient*

MRS. TURNER, *matron of the Sanatorium*

MISS BAILEY

MRS. ABNER

FLYNN

} *Patients*

OTHER PATIENTS OF THE SANATORIUM

MRS. BRENNAN.

(The characters are named in the order in which they appear)

SCENES

ACT I

SCENE I—The Kitchen of the Carmody Home—
Evening.

SCENE II—The Reception Room of the Infirmary,
Hill Farm Sanatorium—An Evening a
Week Later.

ACT II

SCENE I—Assembly Room of the Main Building at
the Sanatorium—A Morning Four Months
Later.

SCENE II—A Crossroads Near the Sanatorium—
Midnight of the Same Day.

ACT III

An Isolation Room and Porch at the Sanatorium—
An Afternoon Four Months Later.

TIME—1910

ACT I

SCENE ONE

SCENE—*The kitchen of the Carmody home on the outskirts of a manufacturing town in Connecticut. On the left, forward, the sink. Farther back, two windows looking out on the yard. In the left corner, rear, the icebox. Immediately to the right of it, in the rear wall, a window opening on the side porch. To the right of this, a dish closet, and a door leading into the hall where the main front entrance to the house and the stairs to the floor above are situated. On the right, to the rear, a door opening on the dining room. Farther forward, the kitchen range with scuttle, wood box, etc. In the center of the room, a table with a red and white cover. Four cane-bottomed chairs are pushed under the table. In front of the stove, two battered, wicker rocking chairs. The floor is partly covered by linoleum strips. The walls are papered a light cheerful color. Several*

old framed picture-supplement prints hang from nails. Everything has a clean neatly-kept appearance. The supper dishes are piled in the sink ready for washing. A dish pan of water simmers on the stove.

It is about eight o'clock in the evening of a bitter cold day in late February of the year 1912.

As the curtain rises, BILL CARMODY is discovered sitting in a rocker by the stove, reading a newspaper and smoking a blackened clay pipe. He is a man of fifty, heavy-set and round-shouldered, with long muscular arms and swollen-veined, hairy hands. His face is bony and ponderous; his nose, short and squat; his mouth large, thick-lipped and harsh; his complexion mottled—red, purple-streaked, and freckled; his hair, short and stubby with a bald spot on the crown. The expression of his small, blue eyes is one of selfish cunning. His voice is loud and hoarse. He wears a flannel shirt, open at the neck, criss-crossed by red suspenders; black, baggy trousers gray with dust; muddy brogans.

His youngest daughter, MARY, is sitting on a chair by the table, front, turning over the pages

of a picture book. She is a delicate, dark-haired, blue-eyed, quiet little girl about eight years old.

CARMODY [*After watching the child's preoccupation for a moment, in a tone of half-exasperated amusement*]: Well, but you're the quiet one, surely! [MARY *looks up at him with a shy smile, her eyes still full of dreams.*] Glory be to God, I'd not know a soul was alive in the room, barrin' myself. What is it you're at, Mary, that there's not a word out of you?

MARY: I'm looking at the pictures.

CARMODY: It's the dead spit and image of your sister, Eileen, you are, with your nose always in a book; and you're like your mother, too, God rest her soul. [*He crosses himself with pious unction and MARY also does so.*] It's Nora and Tom has the high spirits in them like their father; and Billy, too,—if he is a lazy shiftless divil—has the fightin' Carmody blood like me. You're a Cullen like your mother's people. They always was dreamin' their lives out. [*He lights his pipe and shakes his head with ponderous gravity.*] There's no good in too many books, I'll tell you. It's out rompin' and playin' with your brother and sister you ought to be at your age, not carin' a fig for books. [*With a*

glance at the clock.] Is that auld fool of a doctor stayin' the night? If he had his wits about him he'd know in a jiffy 'tis only a cold has taken Eileen, and give her the medicine. Run out in the hall, Mary, and see if you hear him. He may have sneaked away by the front door.

MARY [*Goes out into the hall, rear, and comes back*]: He's upstairs. I heard him talking to Eileen.

CARMODY: Close the door, ye little divil! There's a freezin' draught comin' in. [*She does so and comes back to her chair. CARMODY continues with a sneer.*] It's mad I am to be thinkin' he'd go without gettin' his money—the like of a doctor! [*Angrily.*] Rogues and thieves they are, the lot of them, robbin' the poor like us! I've no use for their drugs at all. They only keep you sick to pay more visits. I'd not have sent for this bucko if Eileen didn't scare me by faintin'.

MARY [*Anxiously*]: Is Eileen very sick, Papa?

CARMODY [*Spitting—roughly*]: If she is, it's her own fault entirely—weakenin' her health by readin' here in the house. This'll be a lesson for her, and for you, too. [*Irritably.*] Put down that book on the table and leave it be. I'll have no more readin' in this house, or I'll take the strap to you!

MARY [*Laying the book on the table*]: It's only pictures.

CARMODY: No back talk! Pictures or not, it's all the same mopin' and lazin' in it. [*After a pause—morosely.*] It's the bad luck I've been havin' altogether this last year since your mother died. Who's to do the work and look after Nora and Tom and yourself, if Eileen is bad took and has to stay in her bed? I'll have to get Mrs. Brennan come look after the house. That means money, too, and where's it to come from? All that I've saved from slavin' and sweatin' in the sun with a gang of lazy Dagoes'll be up the spout in no time. [*Bitterly.*] What a fool a man is to be raisin' a raft of children and him not a millionaire! [*With lugubrious self-pity.*] Mary, dear, it's a black curse God put on me when he took your mother just when I needed her most. [*MARY commences to sob. CARMODY starts and looks at her angrily.*] What are you sniffin' at?

MARY [*Tearfully*]: I was thinking—of Mama.

CARMODY [*Scornfully*]: It's late you are with your tears, and her cold in her grave for a year. Stop it, I'm tellin' you! [*MARY gulps back her sobs.*]

[*There is a noise of childish laughter and screams from the street in front. The outside door is opened*

and slammed, footsteps pound along the hall. The door in the rear is shoved open, and NORA and TOM rush in breathlessly. NORA is a bright, vivacious, red-haired girl of eleven—pretty after an elfish, mischievous fashion—light-hearted and robust.]

[TOM resembles NORA in disposition and appearance. A healthy, good-humored youngster with a shock of sandy hair. He is a year younger than NORA. They are followed into the room, a moment later, by their brother, BILLY, who is evidently loftily disgusted with their antics. BILLY is a fourteen-year-old replica of his father, whom he imitates even to the hoarse, domineering tone of voice.]

CARMODY [*Grumpily*]: Ah, here you are, the lot of you. Shut that door after you! What's the use in me spendin' money for coal if all you do is to let the cold night in the room itself?

NORA [*Hopping over to him—teasingly*]: Me and Tom had a race, Papa. I beat him. [*She sticks her tongue out at her younger brother.*] Slow poke!

TOM: You didn't beat me, neither!

NORA: did, too!

TOM: You did not! You didn't play fair. You tripped me comin' up the steps. Brick-top! Cheater!

NORA [*Flaring up*]: You're a liar! You stumbled over your own big feet, clumsy bones! And I beat you fair. Didn't I, Papa?

CARMODY [*With a grin*]: You did, darlin', and fair, too. [TOM *slinks back to the chair in the rear of table, sulking*. CARMODY *pats NORA's red hair with delighted pride*.] Sure it's you can beat the divil himself!

NORA [*Sticks out her tongue again at Tom*]: See? Liar! [*She goes and perches on the table near MARY who is staring sadly in front of her*.]

CARMODY [*To BILLY—irritably*]: Did you get the plug for me I told you?

BILLY: Sure. [*He takes a plug of tobacco from his pocket and hands it to his father*. NORA *slides down off her perch and disappears, unnoticed, under the table*.]

CARMODY: It's a great wonder you didn't forget it—and me without a chew. [*He bites off a piece and tucks it into his cheek*.]

TOM [*Suddenly clutching at his leg with a yell*]: Ouch! Darn you! [*He kicks frantically at something under the table, but NORA scrambles out at the other end, grinning*.]

CARMODY [*Angrily*]: Shut your big mouth! What is the matter with you at all?

TOM [*Indignantly*]: She pinched me—hard as she could, too—and look at her laughin'!

NORA [*Hopping on the table again*]: Cry-baby! I owed you one.

TOM: I'll fix you. I'll tell Eileen, wait 'n' see!

NORA: Tattle-tale! I don't care. Eileen's sick.

TOM: That's why you dast do it. You dasn't if she was up. I'll get even, you bet!

CARMODY [*Exasperated*]: Shut up your noise! Go up to bed, the two of you, and no more talk, and you go with them, Mary.

NORA [*Giving a quick tug at MARY's hair*]: Come on, Mary. Wake up.

MARY: Ow! [*She begins to cry.*]

CARMODY [*Raising his voice furiously*]: Hush your noise, you soft, weak thing, you! It's nothin' but blubberin' you do be doin' all the time. [*He stands up threateningly.*] I'll have a moment's peace, I will! Off to bed with you before I get the strap! It's crazy mad you all get the moment Eileen's away from you. Go on, now! [*They scurry out of the rear door.*] And be quiet or I'll be up to you!

NORA [*Sticks her head back in the door*]: Can I say good night to Eileen, papa?

CARMODY: No. The doctor's with her yet. [*Then he adds hastily.*] Yes, go in to her, Nora. It'll drive himself out of the house maybe, bad cess to him, and him stayin' half the night. [NORA *waits to hear no more but darts back, shutting the door behind her.* BILLY *takes the chair in front of the table.* CARMODY *sits down again with a groan.*] The rheumatics are in my leg again. [*Shakes his head.*] If Eileen's in bed long those brats'll have the house down.

BILLY: Eileen ain't sick very bad, is she?

CARMODY [*Easily*]: It's a cold only she has. [*Then mournfully.*] Your poor mother died of the same. [BILLY *looks awed.*] Ara, well, it's God's will, I suppose, but where the money'll come from, I dunno. [*With a disparaging glance at his son.*] They'll not be raisin' your wages soon, I'll be bound.

BILLY [*Surlily*]: Naw. The old boss never gives no one a raise, 'less he has to. He's a tight-wad for fair.

CARMODY [*Still scanning him with contempt*]: Five dollars a week—for a strappin' lad the like of you! It's shamed you should be to own up to it. A

divil of a lot of good it was for me to go against Eileen's wish and let you leave off your schoolin' this year like you wanted, thinkin' the money you'd earn at work would help with the house.

BILLY: Aw, goin' to school didn't do me no good. The teachers was all down on me. I couldn't learn nothin' there.

CARMODY [*Disgustedly*]: Nor any other place, I'm thinkin', you're that thick. [*There is a noise from the stairs in the hall.*] Whisht! It's the doctor comin' down from Eileen. What'll he say, I wonder? [*The door in the rear is opened and Doctor Gaynor enters. He is a stout, bald, middle-aged man, forceful of speech, who in the case of patients of the CARMODYS' class dictates rather than advises. CARMODY adopts a whining tone.*] Aw, Doctor, and how's Eileen now? Have you got her cured of the weakness?

GAYNOR [*Does not answer this but comes forward into the room holding out two slips of paper—dictatorially*]: Here are two prescriptions that'll have to be filled immediately.

CARMODY [*Frowning*]: You take them, Billy, and run round to the drug store. [*GAYNOR hands them to BILLY.*]

BILLY: Give me the money, then.

CARMODY [*Reaches down into his pants pocket with a sigh*]: How much will they come to, Doctor?

GAYNOR: About a dollar, I guess.

CARMODY [*Protestingly*]: A dollar! Sure it's expensive medicines you're givin' her for a bit of a cold. [*He meets the doctor's cold glance of contempt and he wilts—grumblingly, as he peels a dollar bill off a small roll and gives it to BILLY.*] Bring back the change—if there is any. And none of your tricks, for I'll stop at the drug store myself tomorrow and ask the man how much it was.

BILLY: Aw, what do you think I am? [*He takes the money and goes out.*]

CARMODY [*Grudgingly*]: Take a chair, Doctor, and tell me what's wrong with Eileen.

GAYNOR [*Seating himself by the table—gravely*]: Your daughter is very seriously ill.

CARMODY [*Irritably*]: Aw, Doctor, didn't I know you'd be sayin' that, anyway!

GAYNOR [*Ignoring this remark—coldly*]: Your daughter has tuberculosis of the lungs.

CARMODY [*With puzzled awe*]: Too-ber-c'losis?

GAYNOR: Consumption, if that makes it plainer to you.

CARMODY [*With dazed terror—after a pause*]: Consumption? Eileen? [*With sudden anger.*] What lie is it you're tellin' me?

GAYNOR [*ICILY*]: Look here, Carmody! I'm not here to stand for your insults!

CARMODY [*Bewilderedly*]: Don't be angry, now, at what I said. Sure I'm out of my wits entirely. Eileen to have the consumption! Ah, Doctor, sure you must be mistaken!

GAYNOR: There's no chance for a mistake, I'm sorry to say. Her right lung is badly affected.

CARMODY [*Desperately*]: It's a bad cold only, maybe.

GAYNOR [*Curtly*]: Don't talk nonsense. [CARMODY *groans*. GAYNOR *continues authoritatively.*] She will have to go to a sanatorium at once. She ought to have been sent to one months ago. The girl's been keeping up on her nerve when she should have been in bed, and it's given the disease a chance to develop. [*Casts a look of indignant scorn at CARMODY who is sitting staring at the floor with an expression of angry stupor on his face.*] It's a wonder to me you didn't see the condition she was in and force her to take care of herself. Why, the girl's nothing but skin and bone!

CARMODY [*With vague fury*]: God blast it!

GAYNOR: No, your kind never realizes things till the crash comes—usually when it's too late. She kept on doing her work, I suppose—taking care of her brothers and sisters, washing, cooking, sweeping, looking after your comfort—worn out—when she should have been in bed—and— [*He gets to his feet with a harsh laugh.*] But what's the use of talking? The damage is done. We've got to set to work to repair it at once. I'll write tonight to Dr. Stanton of the Hill Farm Sanatorium and find out if he has a vacancy. And if luck is with us we can send her there at once. The sooner the better.

CARMODY [*His face growing red with rage*]: Is it sendin' Eileen away to a hospital you'd be? [*Exploding.*] Then you'll not! You'll get that notion out of your head damn quick. It's all nonsense you're stuffin' me with, and lies, makin' things out to be the worst in the world. I'll not believe a word of Eileen having the consumption at all. It's doctors' notions to be always lookin' for a sickness that'd kill you. She'll not move a step out of here, and I say so, and I'm her father!

GAYNOR [*Who has been staring at him with con-*

tempt—coldly angry]: You refuse to let your daughter go to a sanatorium?

CARMODY: I do.

GAYNOR [*Threateningly*]: Then I'll have to report her case to the Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis of this county, and tell them of your refusal to help her.

CARMODY [*Wavering a bit*]: Report all you like, and be damned to you!

GAYNOR [*Ignoring the interruption—impressively*]: A majority of the most influential men of this city are back of the Society. Do you know that? [*Grimly.*] We'll find a way to move you, Carmody, if you try to be stubborn.

CARMODY [*Thoroughly frightened but still protesting*]: Ara, Doctor, you don't see the way of it at all. If Eileen goes to the hospital, who's to be takin' care of the others, and mindin' the house when I'm off to work?

GAYNOR: You can easily hire some woman.

CARMODY [*At once furious again*]: Hire? D' you think I'm a millionaire itself?

GAYNOR [*Contemptuously*]: That's where the shoe pinches, eh? [*In a rage.*] I'm not going to waste any more words on you, Carmody, but I'm damn

well going to see this thing through! You might as well give in first as last.

CARMODY [*Wailing*]: But where's the money comin' from?

GAYNOR [*Brutally*]: That's your concern. Don't lie about your poverty. You've a steady well paid job, and plenty of money to throw away on drunken sprees, I'll bet. The weekly fee at the Hill Farm is only seven dollars. You can easily afford that—the price of a few rounds of drinks.

CARMODY: Seven dollars! And I'll have to pay a woman to come in—and the four of the children eatin' their heads off! Glory be to God, I'll not have a penny saved for me old age—and then it's the poor house!

GAYNOR [*Curtly*]: Don't talk nonsense!

CARMODY: Ah, doctor, it's the truth I'm tellin' you!

GAYNOR: Well, perhaps I can get the Society to pay half for your daughter—if you're really as hard up as you pretend. They're willing to do that where it seems necessary.

CARMODY [*Brightening*]: Ah, Doctor, thank you.

GAYNOR [*Abruptly*]: Then it's all settled?

CARMODY [*Grudgingly—trying to make the best of*

it): I'll do my best for Eileen, if it's needful—and you'll not be tellin' them people about it at all, Doctor?

GAYNOR: Not unless you force me to.

CARMODY: And they'll pay the half, surely?

GAYNOR: I'll see what I can do—for your daughter's sake, not yours, understand!

CARMODY: God bless you, Doctor! [*Grumblingly.*] It's the whole of it they ought to be payin', I'm thinkin', and them with sloos of money. 'Tis them builds the hospitals and why should they be wantin' the poor like me to support them?

GAYNOR [*Disgustedly*]: Bah! [*Abruptly.*] I'll telephone to Doctor Stanton tomorrow morning. Then I'll know something definite when I come to see your daughter in the afternoon.

CARMODY [*Darkly*]: You'll be comin' again tomorrow? [*Half to himself.*] Leave it to the likes of you to be drainin' a man dry. [GAYNOR *has gone out to the hall in rear and does not hear this last remark. There is a loud knock from the outside door. The Doctor comes back into the room carrying his hat and overcoat.*]

GAYNOR: There's someone knocking.

CARMODY: Who'll it be? Ah, it's Fred Nicholls,

maybe. [*In a low voice to GAYNOR who has started to put on his overcoat.*] Eileen's young man, Doctor, that she's engaged to marry, as you might say.

GAYNOR [*Thoughtfully*]: Hmm—yes—she spoke of him. [*As another knock sounds CARMODY hurries to the rear. GAYNOR, after a moment's indecision, takes off his overcoat again and sits down. A moment later CARMODY re-enters followed by FRED NICHOLLS, who has left his overcoat and hat in the hallway. NICHOLLS is a young fellow of twenty-three, stockily built, fair-haired, handsome in a commonplace, conventional mold. His manner is obviously an attempt at *sauve gentility*; he has an easy, taking smile and a ready laugh, but there is a petty, calculating expression in his small, observing, blue eyes. His well-fitting, readymade clothes are carefully pressed. His whole get-up suggests an attitude of man-about-small-town complacency.*]

CARMODY [*As they enter*]: I had a mind to phone to your house but I wasn't wishful to disturb you, knowin' you'd be comin' to call tonight.

NICHOLLS [*With disappointed concern*]: It's nothing serious, I hope.

CARMODY [*Grumblingly*]: Ah, who knows? Here's the doctor. You've not met him?

NICHOLLS [*Politely, looking at GAYNOR who inclines his head stiffly*]: I haven't had the pleasure. Of course I've heard . . .

CARMODY: It's Doctor Gaynor. This is Fred Nicholls, Doctor. [*The two men shake hands with conventional pleased-to-meet-yous.*] Sit down, Fred, that's a good lad, and be talkin' to the Doctor a moment while I go upstairs and see how is Eileen. She's all alone up there.

NICHOLLS: Certainly, Mr. Carmody. Go ahead—and tell her how sorry I am to learn she's under the weather.

CARMODY: I will so. [*He goes out.*]

GAYNOR [*After a pause in which he is studying NICHOLLS*]: Do you happen to be any relative to the Albert Nicholls who is superintendent over at the Downs Manufacturing Company?

NICHOLLS [*Smiling*]: He's sort of a near relative—my father.

GAYNOR: Ah, yes?

NICHOLLS [*With satisfaction*]: I work for the Downs Company myself—bookkeeper . . .

GAYNOR: Miss Carmody—the sick girl upstairs—she had a position there also, didn't she, before her mother died?

NICHOLLS: Yes. She had a job as stenographer for a time. When she graduated from the business college course—I was already working at the Downs—and through my father's influence—you understand. [GAYNOR *nods curtly.*] She was getting on finely, too, and liked the work. It's too bad—her mother's death, I mean—forcing her to give it up and come home to take care of those kids.

GAYNOR: It's a damn shame. That's the main cause of her breakdown.

NICHOLLS [*Frowning*]: I've noticed she's been looking badly lately. So that's the trouble? Well, it's all her father's fault—and her own, too, because whenever I raised a kick about his making a slave of her, she always defended him. [*With a quick glance at the Doctor—in a confidential tone.*] Between us, Carmody's as selfish as they make 'em, if you want my opinion.

GAYNOR [*With a growl*]: He's a hog on two legs.

NICHOLLS [*With a gratified smile*]: You bet! [*With a patronizing air.*] I hope to get Eileen away from all this as soon as—things pick up a little. [*Making haste to explain his connection with the dubious household.*] Eileen and I have gone around together for years—went to Grammar and High

School together—in different classes, of course. She's really a corker—very different from the rest of the family you've seen—like her mother. She's really educated and knows a lot—used to carry off all the prizes at school. My folks like her awfully well. Of course, they'd never stand for—him.

GAYNOR: You'll excuse my curiosity—I've a good reason for it—but you and Miss Carmody are engaged, aren't you? Carmody said you were.

NICHOLLS [*Embarrassed*]: Why, yes, in a way—but nothing definite—no official announcement or anything of that kind. It's all in the future. We have to wait, you know. [*With a sentimental smile.*] We've been sort of engaged for years, you might say. It's always been sort of understood between us. [*He laughs awkwardly.*]

GAYNOR [*Gravely*]: Then I can be frank with you. I'd like to be because I may need your help. I don't put much faith in any promise Carmody makes. Besides, you're bound to know anyway. She'd tell you.

NICHOLLS [*A look of apprehension coming over his face*]: Is it—about her sickness?

GAYNOR: Yes.

NICHOLLS: Then—it's serious?

GAYNOR: It's pulmonary tuberculosis—consumption.

NICHOLLS [*Stunned*]: Consumption? Good heavens! [*After a dazed pause—lamely.*] Are you sure, Doctor?

GAYNOR: Positive. [NICHOLLS *stares at him with vaguely frightened eyes.*] It's had a good start—thanks to her father's blind selfishness—but let's hope that can be overcome. The important thing is to ship her off to a sanatorium immediately. Carmody wouldn't hear of it at first. However, I managed to bully him into consenting; but I don't trust his word. That's where you can be of help. It's up to you to convince him that it's imperative she be sent away at once—for the safety of those around her as well as her own.

NICHOLLS [*Confusedly*]: I'll do my best, Doctor. [*As if he couldn't yet believe his ears—shuddering.*] Good heavens! She never said a word about—being so ill. She's had a cold. But, Doctor,—do you think this sanatorium will . . . ?

GAYNOR [*With hearty hopefulness*]: Most certainly. She has every chance. The Hill Farm has a really surprising record of arrested cases—as good as any place in the country. Of course, she'll

never be able to live as carelessly as before, even after the most favorable results. She'll have to take care of herself. [*Apologetically.*] I'm telling you all this as being the one most intimately concerned. I don't count Carmody. You are the one who will have to assume responsibility for her welfare when she returns to everyday life.

NICHOLLS [*Answering as if he were merely talking to screen the thoughts in his mind*]: Yes—certainly—. Where is this sanatorium, Doctor—very far away?

GAYNOR: Half an hour by train to the town. The sanatorium is two miles out on the hills—a nice drive. You'll be able to see her whenever you've a day off. It's a pleasant trip.

NICHOLLS [*A look of horrified realization has been creeping into his eyes*]: You said—Eileen ought to be sent away—for the sake of those around her...?

GAYNOR: That's obvious. T. B. is extremely contagious, you must know that. Yet I'll bet she's been fondling and kissing those brothers and sisters of hers regardless. [NICHOLLS *fidgets uneasily on his chair.*] And look at this house sealed tight against the fresh air! Not a window open an inch! [*Fuming.*] That's what we're up against in the

fight with T.B.—a total ignorance of the commonest methods of prevention . . .

NICHOLLS [*His eyes shiftily avoiding the doctor's face*]: Then the kids might have gotten it—by kissing Eileen?

GAYNOR: It stands to reason that's a common means of communication.

NICHOLLS [*Very much shaken*]: Yes. I suppose it must be. But that's terrible, isn't it? [*With sudden volubility, evidently extremely anxious to wind up this conversation and conceal his thoughts from GAYNOR.*] I'll promise you, Doctor, I'll tell Carmody straight what's what. He'll pay attention to me or I'll know the reason why.

GAYNOR [*Getting to his feet and picking up his overcoat*]: Good boy! You've probably saved me a disagreeable squabble. I won't wait for Carmody. The sight of him makes me lose my temper. Tell him I'll be back tomorrow with definite information about the sanatorium.

NICHOLLS [*Helping him on with his overcoat, anxious to have him go*]: All right, Doctor.

GAYNOR [*Puts on his hat*]: And do your best to cheer the patient up when you talk to her. Give her confidence in her ability to get well. That's half

the battle. And she'll believe it, coming from you.

NICHOLLS [*Hastily*]: Yes, yes, I'll do all I can.

GAYNOR [*Turns to the door and shakes NICHOLLS' hand sympathetically*]: And don't take it to heart too much yourself. There's every hope, remember that. In six months she'll come back to you her old self again.

NICHOLLS [*Nervously*]: It's hard on a fellow—so suddenly—but I'll remember—and—[*abruptly*] Good night, Doctor.

GAYNOR: Good night. [*He goes out. The outer door is heard shutting behind him. NICHOLLS closes the door, rear, and comes back and sits in the chair in front of table. He rests his chin on his hands and stares before him, a look of desperate, frightened calculation coming into his eyes. CARMODY is heard clumping heavily down the stairs. A moment later he enters. His expression is glum and irritated.*]

CARMODY [*Coming forward to his chair by the stove*]: Has he gone away?

NICHOLLS [*Turning on him with a look of repulsion*]: Yes. He said to tell you he'd be back tomorrow with definite information—about the sanatorium business.

CARMODY [*Darkly*]: Oho, he did, did he? Maybe

I'll surprise him. I'm thinkin' it's lyin' he is about Eileen's sickness, and her lookin' as fresh as a daisy with the high color in her cheeks when I saw her now.

NICHOLLS [*Impatiently*]: That's silly, Mr. Carmody. Gaynor knows his business. [*After a moment's hesitation.*] He told me all about Eileen's sickness.

CARMODY [*Resentfully*]: Did he now, the auld monkey! Small thanks to him to be tellin' our secrets to the town.

NICHOLLS [*Exasperated*]: I didn't want to learn your affairs. He only told me because you'd said I and Eileen were engaged. You're the one who was telling—secrets.

CARMODY [*Irritated*]: Ara, don't be talkin'! That's no secret at all with the whole town watchin' Eileen and you spoonin' together from the time you was kids.

NICHOLLS [*Vindictively*]: Well, the whole town is liable to find out . . . [*He checks himself.*]

CARMODY [*Too absorbed in his own troubles to notice this threat*]: To hell with the town and all in it! I've troubles enough of my own. So he told you he'd send Eileen away to the hospital? I've half a

mind not to let him—and let him try to make me! [*With a frown.*] But Eileen herself says she's wantin' to go, now. [*Angrily.*] It's all that divil's notion he put in her head that the children'd be catchin' her sickness that makes her willin' to go.

NICHOLLS [*With a superior air*]: From what he told me, I should say it was the only thing for Eileen to do if she wants to get well quickly. [*Spitefully.*] And I'd certainly not go against Gaylor, if I was you. He told me he'd make it hot for you if you did. He will, too, you can bet on that. He's that kind.

CARMODY [*Worriedly*]: He's a divil. But what can he do—him and his Sasiety? I'm her father.

NICHOLLS [*Seeing CARMODY'S uneasiness with revengeful satisfaction*]: Oh, he'll do what he says, don't worry! You'll make a mistake if you think he's bluffing. It'd probably get in all the papers about you refusing. Everyone would be down on you. [*As a last jab—spitefully.*] You might even lose your job over it, people would be so sore.

CARMODY [*Jumping to his feet*]: Ah, divil take him! Let him send her where he wants, then. I'll not be sayin' a word.

NICHOLLS [*As an afterthought*]: And, honestly,

Mr. Carmody, I don't see how you can object for a second—after he's told you it's absolutely necessary for Eileen to go away. [*Seeing CARMODY'S shaken condition, he finishes boldly.*] You've some feeling for your own daughter, haven't you? You'd be a fine father if you hadn't!

CARMODY [*Apprehensively*]: Whisht! She might hear you. But you're right. Let her do what she's wishful to get well soon.

NICHOLLS [*Complacently—feeling his duty in the matter well done*]: That's the right spirit. I knew you'd see it that way. And you and I'll do all we can to help her. [*He gets to his feet.*] Well, I guess I'll have to go. Tell Eileen . . .

CARMODY: You're not goin'? Sure, Eileen is puttin' on her clothes to come down and have a look at you. She'll be here in a jiffy. Sit down now, and wait for her.

NICHOLLS [*Suddenly panic-stricken by the prospect of facing her*]: No—no—I can't stay—I only came for a moment—I've got an appointment—honestly. Besides, it isn't right for her to be up. She's too weak. It'll make her worse. You should have told her. [*The door in the rear is opened and EILEEN enters. She is just over eighteen. Her wavy*

mass of dark hair is parted in the middle and combed low on her forehead, covering her ears, to a knot at the back of her head. The oval of her face is spoiled by a long, rather heavy, Irish jaw contrasting with the delicacy of her other features. Her eyes are large and blue, confident in their compelling candor and sweetness; her lips, full and red, half-open over strong even teeth, droop at the corners into an expression of wistful sadness; her clear complexion is unnaturally striking in its contrasting colors, rose and white; her figure is slight and undeveloped. She wears a plain black dress with a bit of white at the neck and wrists. She stands looking appealingly at NICHOLLS who avoids her glance. Her eyes have a startled stunned expression as if the doctor's verdict were still in her ears.]

EILEEN [*Faintly—forcing a smile*]: Good-evening, Fred. [*Her eyes search his face anxiously.*]

NICHOLLS [*Confusedly*]: Hello, Eileen. I'm so sorry to . . . [*Clumsily trying to cover up his confusion, he goes over and leads her to a chair.*] You must sit down. You've got to take care of yourself. You never ought to have gotten up tonight.

EILEEN [*Sits down*]: I wanted to talk to you.

[*She raises her face with a pitiful smile.* NICHOLLS hurriedly moves back to his own chair.]

NICHOLLS [*Almost brusquely*]: I could have talked to you from the hall. You're silly to take chances just now. [EILEEN'S eyes show her hurt at his tone.]

CARMODY [*Seeing his chance—hastily*]: You'll be stayin' a while now, Fred? I'll take a walk down the road. I'm needin' a drink to clear my wits. [*He goes to the door in rear.*]

EILEEN [*Reproachfully*]: You won't be long, Father? And please don't—you know.

CARMODY [*Exasperated*]: Sure who wouldn't get drunk with all the sorrows of the world piled on him? [*He stamps out. A moment later the outside door bangs behind him. EILEEN sighs.* NICHOLLS walks up and down with his eyes on the floor.]

NICHOLLS [*Furious at CARMODY for having left him in this situation*]: Honestly, Eileen, your father is the limit. I don't see how you stand for him. He's the most selfish . . .

EILEEN [*Gently*]: Sssh! You mustn't, Fred. He's not to blame. He just doesn't understand. [NICHOLLS snorts disdainfully.] Don't! Let's not talk about him now. We won't have many more

evenings together for a long, long time. Did Father or the doctor tell you . . . [*She falters.*]

NICHOLLS [*Not looking at her—glumly*]: Everything there was to tell, I guess.

EILEEN [*Hastening to comfort him*]: You mustn't worry, Fred. Please don't! It'd make it so much worse for me if I thought you did. I'll be all right. I'll do exactly what they tell me, and in a few months I'll be back so fat and healthy you won't know me.

NICHOLLS [*Lamely*]: Oh, there's no doubt of that. No one's worrying about your not getting well quick.

EILEEN: It won't be long. We can write often, and it isn't far away. You can come out and see me every Sunday—if you want to.

NICHOLLS [*Hastily*]: Of course I will!

EILEEN [*Looking at his face searchingly*]: Why do you act so funny? Why don't you sit down—here, by me? Don't you want to?

NICHOLLS [*Drawing up a chair by hers—flushing guiltily*]: I—I'm all bawled up, Eileen. I don't know what I'm doing.

EILEEN [*Putting her hand on his knee*]: Poor Fred! I'm so sorry I have to go. I didn't want to at

first. I knew how hard it would be on Father and the kids—especially little Mary. [*Her voice trembles a bit.*] And then the doctor said if I stayed I'd be putting them all in danger. He even ordered me not to kiss them any more. [*She bites her lips to restrain a sob—then coughs, a soft, husky cough.* NICHOLLS *shrinks away from her to the edge of his chair, his eyes shifting nervously with fright.* EILEEN *continues gently.*] So I've got to go and get well, don't you see?

NICHOLLS [*Wetting his dry lips*]: Yes—it's better.

EILEEN [*Sadly*]: I'll miss the kids so much. Taking care of them has meant so much to me since Mother died. [*With a half-sob she suddenly throws her arms about his neck and hides her face on his shoulder. He shudders and fights against an impulse to push her away.*] But I'll miss you most of all, Fred. [*She lifts her lips towards his, expecting a kiss. He seems about to kiss her—then averts his face with a shrinking movement, pretending he hasn't seen.* EILEEN'S *eyes grow wide with horror. She throws herself back into her own chair, staring accusingly at NICHOLLS. She speaks chokingly.*] Fred! Why—why didn't you kiss—what is it? Are you—afraid? [*With a moaning sound.*] Oooh!

NICHOLLS [*Goaded by this accusation into a display of manhood, seizes her fiercely by the arms*]: No! What—what d'you mean? [*He tries to kiss her but she hides her face.*]

EILEEN [*In a muffled voice of hysterical self-accusation, pushing his head away*]: No, no, you mustn't! I was wrong. The doctor told you not to, didn't he? Please don't, Fred! It would be awful if anything happened to you—through me. [NICHOLLS *gives up his attempts, recalled to caution by her words. She raises her face and tries to force a smile through her tears.*] But you can kiss me on the forehead, Fred. That can't do any harm. [*His face crimson, he does so. She laughs hysterically.*] It seems so silly—being kissed that way—by you. [*She gulps back a sob and continues to attempt to joke.*] I'll have to get used to it, won't I?

[*Curtain Falls.*]

ACT I

SCENE TWO

SCENE—*The reception room of the Infirmary, a large, high-ceilinged room painted white, with oiled, hardwood floor. In the left wall, forward, a row of four windows. Farther back, the main entrance from the driveway, and another window. In the rear wall left, a glass partition looking out on the sleeping porch. A row of white beds, with the faces of patients barely peeping out from under piles of heavy bed-clothes, can be seen. To the right of this partition, a bookcase, and a door leading to the hall past the patients' rooms. Farther right, another door opening on the examining room. In the right wall, rear, a door to the office. Farther forward, a row of windows. In front of the windows, a long dining table with chairs. On the left of the table, toward the center of the room, a chimney with two open fireplaces, facing left and right. Several wicker armchairs*

are placed around the fireplace on the left in which a cheerful wood fire is crackling. To the left of center, a round reading and writing table with a green-shaded electric lamp. Other electric lights are in brackets around the walls. Easy chairs stand near the table which is stacked with magazines. Rocking chairs are placed here and there about the room, near the windows, etc. A Victrola stands near the left wall, forward.

It is nearing eight o'clock of a cold evening about a week later.

At the rise of the curtain STEPHEN MURRAY is discovered sitting in a chair in front of the fireplace, left. MURRAY is thirty years old—a tall, slender, rather unusual looking fellow with a pale face, sunken under high cheek-bones, lined about the eyes and mouth, jaded and worn for one still so young. His intelligent, large hazel eyes have a tired, dispirited expression in repose, but can quicken instantly with a concealment mechanism of mocking, careless humor whenever his inner privacy is threatened. His large mouth aids this process of protection by a quick change from its set apathy to a cheerful grin of cynical good nature. He gives off the im-

pression of being somehow dissatisfied with himself but not yet embittered enough by it to take it out on others. His manner, as revealed by his speech—nervous, inquisitive, alert—seems more an acquired quality than any part of his real nature. He stoops a trifle, giving him a slightly round-shouldered appearance. He is dressed in a shabby dark suit, baggy at the knees. He is staring into the fire, dreaming, an open book lying unheeded on the arm of his chair. The Victrola is whining out the last strains of Dvořák's Humoresque. In the doorway to the office, Miss Gilpin stands talking to Miss Howard. The former is a slight, middle-aged woman with black hair, and a strong, intelligent face, its expression of resolute efficiency softened and made kindly by her warm, sympathetic gray eyes. Miss Howard is tall, slender and blond—decidedly pretty and provokingly conscious of it, yet with a certain air of seriousness underlying her apparent frivolity. She is twenty years old. The elder woman is dressed in the all white of a full-fledged nurse. Miss Howard wears the gray-blue uniform of one still in training. The record peters out. MURRAY sighs with relief but makes

no move to get up and stop the grinding needle.

MISS HOWARD *hurries across to the machine.*

MISS GILPIN *goes back into the office.*

MISS HOWARD [*Takes off the record, glancing at MURRAY with amused vexation*]: It's a wonder you wouldn't stop this machine grinding itself to bits, Mr. Murray.

MURRAY [*With a smile*]: I was hoping the darn thing would bust. [MISS HOWARD *sniffs*. MURRAY *grins at her teasingly*.] It keeps you from talking to me. That's the real music.

MISS HOWARD [*Comes over to his chair laughing*]: It's easy to see you've got Irish in you. Do you know what I think? I think you're a natural born kidder. All newspaper reporters are like that, I've heard.

MURRAY: You wrong me terribly. [*Then frowning*]: And it isn't charitable to remind me of my job. I hoped to forget all about it up here.

MISS HOWARD [*Surprised*]: I think it's great to be able to write. I wish I could. You ought to be proud of it.

MURRAY [*Glumly*]: I'm not. You can't call it writing—not what I did—small town stuff. [*Changing the subject*.] But I wanted to ask you something.

Do you know when I'm to be moved away to the shacks?

MISS HOWARD: In a few days, I guess. Don't be impatient. [MURRAY *grunts and moves nervously on his chair.*] What's the matter? Don't you like us here at the Infirmary?

MURRAY [*Smiling*]: Oh—you—yes! [*Then seriously.*] I don't care for the atmosphere, though. [*He waves his hand toward the partition looking out on the porch.*] All those people in bed out there on the porch seem so sick. It's depressing. I can't do anything for them—and—it makes me feel so helpless.

MISS HOWARD: Well, it's the rules, you know. All the patients have to come here first until Doctor Stanton finds out whether they're well enough to be sent out to the shacks and cottages. And remember you're a patient just like the ones in bed out there—even if you are up and about.

MURRAY: I know it. But I don't feel as I were—really sick like them.

MISS HOWARD [*Wisely*]: None of them do, either.

MURRAY [*After a moment's reflection—cynically*]:

Yes, I suppose it's that pipe dream that keeps us all going, eh?

MISS HOWARD: Well, you ought to be thankful. You're very lucky, if you knew it. [*Lowering her voice.*] Shall I tell you a secret? I've seen your chart and *you've* no cause to worry. Doctor Stanton joked about it. He said you were too uninteresting—there was so little the matter with you.

MURRAY [*Pleased but pretending indifference*]: Humph! He's original in that opinion.

MISS HOWARD: I know it's hard you're being the only one up the week since you've been here, with no one to talk to; but there's another patient due today. Maybe she'll be well enough to be around with you. [*With a quick glance at her wrist watch.*] She can't be coming unless she got in on the last train.

MURRAY [*Interestedly*]: It's a she, eh?

MISS HOWARD: Yes.

MURRAY [*Grinning provokingly*]: Young?

MISS HOWARD: Eighteen, I believe. [*Seeing his grin—with feigned pique.*] I suppose you'll be asking if she's pretty next! Oh, you men are all alike, sick or well. Her name is Carmody, that's the only other thing I know. So there!

MURRAY: Carmody?

MISS HOWARD: Oh, you don't know her. She's from another part of the state from your town.

MISS GILPIN [*Appearing in the office doorway*]: Miss Howard.

MISS HOWARD: Yes, Miss Gilpin. [*In an aside to MURRAY as she leaves him*]: It's time for those horrid diets. [*She hurries back into the office. MURRAY stares into the fire. MISS HOWARD reappears from the office and goes out by the door to the hall, rear. Carriage wheels are heard from the driveway in front of the house on the left. They stop. After a pause there is a sharp rap on the door and a bell rings insistently. Men's muffled voices are heard in argument. MURRAY turns curiously in his chair. MISS GILPIN comes from the office and walks quickly to the door, unlocking and opening it. EILEEN enters, followed by NICHOLLS, who is carrying her suit-case, and by her father.*]

EILEEN: I'm Miss Carmody. I believe Doctor Gaynor wrote . . .

MISS GILPIN [*Taking her hand—with kind affability*]: We've been expecting you all day. How do you do? I'm Miss Gilpin. You came on the last train, didn't you?

EILEEN [*Heartened by the other woman's kindness*]: Yes. This is my father, Miss Gilpin—and Mr. Nicholls—[MISS GILPIN *shakes hands cordially with the two men who are staring about the room in embarrassment. CARMODY has very evidently been drinking. His voice is thick and his face puffed and stupid. NICHOLLS' manner is that of one who is accomplishing a necessary but disagreeable duty with the best grace possible, but is frightfully eager to get it over and done with. CARMODY's condition embarrasses him acutely and when he glances at him it is with hatred and angry disgust.*]

MISS GILPIN [*Indicating the chairs in front of the windows on the left, forward*]: Won't you gentlemen sit down? [CARMODY *grunts sullenly and plumps himself into the one nearest the door. NICHOLLS hesitates, glancing down at the suit-case he carries. MISS GILPIN turns to EILEEN.*] And now we'll get you settled immediately. Your room is all ready for you. If you'll follow me— [*She turns toward the door in rear, center.*]

EILEEN: Let me take the suit-case now, Fred.

MISS GILPIN [*As he is about to hand it to her— decisively*]: No, my dear, you mustn't. Put the case right down there, Mr. Nicholls. I'll have it taken

to Miss Carmody's room in a moment. [*She shakes her finger at EILEEN with kindly admonition.*] That's the first rule you'll have to learn. Never exert yourself or tax your strength. It's very important. You'll find laziness is a virtue instead of a vice with us.

EILEEN [*Confused*]: I . . . I didn't know . . .

MISS GILPIN [*Smiling*]: Of course you didn't. And now if you'll come with me I'll show you your room. We'll have a little chat there and I can explain all the other important rules in a second. The gentlemen can make themselves comfortable in the meantime. We won't be gone more than a moment.

NICHOLLS [*Feeling called upon to say something*]: Yes—we'll wait—certainly, we're all right. [*CARMODY remains silent, glowering at the fire. NICHOLLS sits down beside him. MISS GILPIN and EILEEN go out. MURRAY switches his chair so he can observe the two men out of the corner of his eye while pretending to be absorbed in his book.*]

CARMODY [*Looking about shiftily and reaching for the inside pocket of his overcoat*]: I'll be havin' a nip now we're alone, and that cacklin' hen gone. I'm feelin' sick in the pit of the stomach. [*He pulls out a pint flask, half full.*]

NICHOLLS [*Excitedly*]: For God's sake, don't! Put that bottle away! [*In a whisper.*] Don't you see that fellow in the chair there?

CARMODY [*Taking a big drink*]: Ah, I'm not mindin' a man at all. Sure I'll bet it's himself would be likin' a taste of the same. [*He appears about to get up and invite MURRAY to join him but NICHOLLS grabs his arm.*]

NICHOLLS [*With a frightened look at MURRAY who appears buried in his book*]: Stop it, you . . . Don't you know he's probably a patient and they don't allow them . . .

CARMODY [*Scornfully*]: A sick one, and him readin' a book like a dead man without a civil word out of him! It's queer they'd be allowin' the sick ones to read books when I'll bet it's the same lazy readin' in the house brought the half of them down with the consumption itself. [*Raising his voice.*] I'm thinkin' this whole shebang is a big, thievin' fake—and I've always thought so.

NICHOLLS [*Furiously*]: Put that bottle away, damn it! And don't shout. You're not in a barrel-house.

CARMODY [*With provoking calm*]: I'll put it back when I'm ready, not before, and no lip from you!

NICHOLLS [*With fierce disgust*]: You're drunk now. It's disgusting.

CARMODY [*Rag'ng*]: Drunk, am I? Is it the like of a young jackass like you that's still wet behind the ears to be tellin' me I'm drunk?

NICHOLLS [*Half-rising from his chair—plead-ingly*]: For heaven's sake, Mr. Carmody, remember where we are and don't raise any rumpus. What'll Eileen say? Do you want to make trouble for her at the start?

CARMODY [*Puts the bottle away hastily, mumbling to himself—then glowers about the room scornfully with blinking eyes*]: It's a grand hotel this is, I'm thinkin', for the rich to be takin' their ease, and not a hospital for the poor, but the poor has to pay for it.

NICHOLLS [*Fearful of another outbreak*]: Sshh!

CARMODY: Don't be shshin' at me? I'm tellin' you the truth. I'd make Eileen come back out of this tonight if that divil of a doctor didn't have me by the throat.

NICHOLLS [*Glancing at him nervously*]: I wonder how soon she'll be back? The carriage is waiting for us. We'll have to hurry to make that last train

back. If we miss it—it means two hours on the damn trolley.

CARMODY [*Angrily*]: Is it anxious to get out of her sight you are, and you engaged to marry and pretendin' to love her? [NICHOLLS *flushes guiltily*. MURRAY *pricks up his ears and stares over at NICHOLLS*. *The latter meets his glance, scowls, and hurriedly averts his eyes*. CARMODY *goes on accusingly*.] Sure, it's no heart at all you have—and her your sweetheart for years—and her sick with the consumption—and you wild to run away from her and leave her alone.

NICHOLLS [*Springing to his feet—furiously*]: That's a . . . ! [*He controls himself with an effort*. *His voice trembles*.] You're not responsible for the idiotic things you're saying or I'd . . . [*He turns away, seeking some escape from the old man's tongue*.] I'll see if the man is still there with the rig. [*He goes to the door on left and goes out*.]

CARMODY [*Following him with his eyes*]: Go to hell, for all I'm preventin'. You've got no guts of a man in you. [*He addresses MURRAY with the good nature inspired by the flight of NICHOLLS*.] Is it true you're one of the consumptives, young fellow?

MURRAY [*Delighted by this speech—with a grin*]:
Yes, I'm one of them.

CARMODY: My name's Carmody. What's yours, then?

MURRAY: Murray.

CARMODY [*Slapping his thigh*]: Irish as Paddy's pig! [MURRAY *nods*. CARMODY *brightens and grows confidential*.] I'm glad to be knowin' you're one of us. You can keep an eye on Eileen. That's my daughter that come with us. She's got consumption like yourself.

MURRAY: I'll be glad to do all I can.

CARMODY: Thanks to you—though it's a grand life she'll be havin' here from the fine look of the place. [*With whining self-pity*.] It's me it's hard on, God help me, with four small children and me widowed, and havin' to hire a woman to come in and look after them and the house now that Eileen's sick; and payin' for her curin' in this place, and me with only a bit of money in the bank for my old age. That's hard, now, on a man, and who'll say it isn't?

MURRAY [*Made uncomfortable by this confidence*]:
Hard luck always comes in bunches. [*To head off*
CARMODY *who is about to give vent to more woe*—

quickly, with a glance toward the door from the hall.]
If I'm not mistaken, here comes your daughter now.

CARMODY [*As EILEEN comes into the room*]: I'll make you acquainted. Eileen! [*She comes over to them, embarrassed to find her father in his condition so chummy with a stranger. MURRAY rises to his feet.*] This is Mr. Murray, Eileen. I want you to meet. He's Irish and he'll put you on to the ropes of the place. He's got the consumption, too, God pity him.

EILEEN [*Distressed*]: Oh, Father, how can you . . . [*With a look at MURRAY which pleads for her father.*] I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Murray.

MURRAY [*With a straight glance at her which is so frankly admiring that she flushes and drops her eyes*]: I'm glad to meet you. [*The front door is opened and NICHOLLS re-appears, shivering with the cold. He stares over at the others with ill-concealed irritation.*]

CARMODY [*Noticing him—with malicious satisfaction*]: Oho, here you are again. [*NICHOLLS scowls and turns away. CARMODY addresses his daughter with a sly wink at MURRAY.*] I thought Fred was slidin' down hill to the train with his head bare to the frost, and him so desperate hurried to get away from here. Look at the knees on him clappin'

together with the cold, and with the great fear that's in him he'll be catchin' a sickness in this place! [NICHOLLS, *his guilty conscience stabbed to the quick, turns pale with impotent rage.*]

EILEEN [*Remonstrating pitifully*]: Father! Please! [*She hurries over to Nicholls.*] Oh, please don't mind him, Fred! You know what he is when he's drinking. He doesn't mean a word he's saying.

NICHOLLS [*Thickly*]: That's all right—for you to say. But I won't forget—I'm sick and tired standing for—I'm not used to—such people.

EILEEN [*Shrinking from him*]: Fred!

NICHOLLS [*With a furious glance at MURRAY*]: Before that cheap slob, too—letting him know everything!

EILEEN [*Faintly*]: He seems—very nice.

NICHOLLS: You've got your eyes set on him already, have you? Leave it to you! No fear of your not having a good time of it out here!

EILEEN: Fred!

NICHOLLS: Well, go ahead if you want to. I don't care. I'll . . . [*Startled by the look of anguish which comes over her face, he hastily swallows his words. He takes out watch—fiercely.*] We'll miss that train, damn it!

EILEEN [*In a stricken tone*]: Oh, Fred! [*Then forcing back her tears she calls to CARMODY in a strained voice.*] Father! You'll have to go now. Miss Gilpin said to tell you you'd have to go right away to make the train.

CARMODY [*Shaking hands with MURRAY*]: I'll be goin'. Keep your eye on her. I'll be out soon to see her and you and me'll have another chin.

MURRAY: Glad to. Good-bye for the present. [*He walks to windows on the far right, turning his back considerately on their leave-taking.*]

EILEEN [*Comes to CARMODY and hangs on his arm as they proceed to the door*]: Be sure and kiss them all for me—Billy and Tom and Nora and little Mary—and bring them out to see me as soon as you can, Father, please! And you come often, too, won't you? And don't forget to tell Mrs. Brennan all the directions I gave you coming out on the train. I told her but she mightn't remember—about Mary's bath—and to give Tom his . . .

CARMODY [*Impatiently*]: Hasn't she brought up brats of her own, and doesn't she know the way of it? Don't be worryin' now, like a fool.

EILEEN [*Helplessly*]: Never mind telling her, then. I'll write to her.

CARMODY: You'd better not. Leave her alone. She'll not wish you mixin' in with her work and tellin' her how to do it.

EILEEN [*Aghast*]: Her work! [*She seems at the end of her tether—wrung too dry for any further emotion. She kisses her father at the door with indifference and speaks calmly.*] Good-bye, Father.

CARMODY [*In a whining tone of injury*]: A cold kiss! And never a small tear out of her! Is your heart a stone? [*Drunken tears well from his eyes and he blubbers.*] And your own father going back to a lone house with a stranger in it!

EILEEN [*Wearily in a dead voice*]: You'll miss your train, Father.

CARMODY [*Raging in a second*]: I'm off, then! Come on, Fred. It's no welcome we have with her here in this place—and a great curse on this day I brought her to it! [*He stamps out.*]

EILEEN [*In the same dead tone*]: Good-bye, Fred.

NICHOLLS [*Repenting his words of a moment ago—confusedly*]: I'm sorry, Eileen—for what I said. I didn't mean—you know what your father is—excuse me, won't you?

EILEEN [*Without feeling*]: Yes.

NICHOLLS: And I'll be out soon—in a week if I

can make it. Well then,—good-bye for the present. [*He bends down as if to kiss her but she shrinks back out of his reach.*]

EILEEN [*A faint trace of mockery in her weary voice*]: No, Fred. Remember you mustn't now.

NICHOLLS [*In an instant huff*]: Oh, if that's the way you feel about . . . [*He strides out and slams the door viciously behind him. EILEEN walks slowly back toward the fireplace, her face fixed in a dead calm of despair. As she sinks into one of the armchairs, the strain becomes too much. She breaks down, hiding her face in her hands, her frail shoulders heaving with the violence of her sobs. At this sound, MURRAY turns from the windows and comes over near her chair.*]

MURRAY [*After watching her for a moment—in an embarrassed tone of sympathy*]: Come on, Miss Carmody, that'll never do. I know it's hard at first—but—getting yourself all worked up is bad for you. You'll run a temperature and then they'll keep you in bed—which isn't pleasant. Take hold of yourself! It isn't so bad up here—really—once you get used to it! [*The shame she feels at giving way in the presence of a stranger only adds to her loss of control and she sobs heartbrokenly. MURRAY walks*

up and down nervously, visibly nonplussed and upset. Finally he hits upon something.] One of the nurses will be in any minute. You don't want them to see you like this.

EILEEN [*Chokes back her sobs and finally raises her face and attempts a smile*]: I'm sorry—to make such a sight of myself. I just couldn't help it.

MURRAY [*focularly*]: Well, they say a good cry does you a lot of good.

EILEEN [*Forcing a smile*]: I do feel—better.

MURRAY [*Staring at her with a quizzical smile—cynically*]: You shouldn't take those lovers' squabbles so seriously. Tomorrow he'll be sorry—you'll be sorry. He'll write begging forgiveness—you'll do ditto. Result—all serene again.

EILEEN [*A shadow of pain on her face—with dignity*]: Don't—please.

MURRAY [*Angry at himself—hanging his head contritely*]: I'm a fool. Pardon me. I'm rude sometimes—before I know it. [*He shakes off his confusion with a renewed attempt at a joking tone.*] You can blame your father for any breaks I make. He made me your guardian, you know—told me to see that you behaved.

EILEEN [*With a genuine smile*]: Oh, father!

[*Flushing.*] You mustn't mind anything he said to-night.

MURRAY [*Thoughtlessly*]: Yes, he was well lit up. I envied him. [EILEEN *looks very shame-faced.* MURRAY *sees it and exclaims in exasperation at himself.*] Darn! There I go again putting my foot in it! [*With an irrepressible grin.*] I ought to have my tongue operated on—that's what's the matter with me. [*He laughs and throws himself in a chair.*]

EILEEN [*Forced in spite of herself to smile with him*]: You're candid, at any rate, Mr. Murray.

MURRAY: Don't misunderstand me. Far be it from me to cast slurs at your father's high spirits. I said I envied him his jag and that's the truth. The same candor compels me to confess that I was pickled to the gills myself when I arrived here. Fact! I made love to all the nurses and generally disgraced myself—and had a wonderful time.

EILEEN: I suppose it does make you forget your troubles—for a while.

MURRAY [*Waving this aside*]: I didn't want to forget—not for a second. I wasn't drowning my sorrow. I was hilariously celebrating.

EILEEN [*Astonished—by this time quite interested in this queer fellow to the momentary forgetfulness of*]

her own grief): Celebrating—coming here? But—aren't you sick?

MURRAY: T. B.? Yes, of course. [*Confidentially*. But it's only a matter of time when I'll be all right again. I hope it won't be too soon. I was dying for a rest—a good, long rest with time to think about things. I'm due to get what I wanted here. That's why I celebrated.

EILEEN [*With wide eyes*]: I wonder if you really mean . . .

MURRAY: What I've been sayin'? I sure do—every word of it!

EILEEN [*Puzzled*]: I can't understand how anyone could . . . [*With a worried glance over her shoulder*.] I think I'd better look for Miss Gilpin, hadn't I? She may wonder . . . [*She half rises from her chair*.]

MURRAY [*Quickly*]: No. Please don't go yet. Sit down. Please do. [*She glances at him irresolutely, then resumes her chair*.] They'll give you your diet of milk and shoo you off to bed on that freezing porch soon enough, don't worry. I'll see to it that you don't fracture any rules. [*Hitching his chair nearer hers,—impulsively*.] In all charity to me you've got to stick awhile. I haven't had a chance

to really talk to a soul for a week. You found what I said a while ago hard to believe, didn't you?

EILEEN [*With a smile*]: Isn't it? You said you hoped you wouldn't get well too soon!

MURRAY: And I meant it! This place is honestly like heaven to me—a lonely heaven till your arrival. [EILEEN *looks embarrassed*.] And why wouldn't it be? I've no fear for my health—eventually. Just let me tell you what I was getting away from . . . [*With a sudden laugh full of a weary bitterness*.] Do you know what it means to work from seven at night till three in the morning as a reporter on a morning newspaper in a town of twenty thousand people—for *ten years*? No. You don't. You can't. No one could who hadn't been through the mill. But what it did to me—it made me happy—yes, happy!—to get out here—T. B. and all, notwithstanding.

EILEEN [*Looking at him curiously*]: But I always thought being a reporter was so interesting.

MURRAY [*With a cynical laugh*]: Interesting? On a small town rag? A month of it, perhaps, when you're a kid and new to the game. But ten years. Think of it! With only a raise of a couple of dollars every blue moon or so, and a weekly spree on

Saturday night to vary the monotony. [*He laughs again.*] Interesting, eh? Getting the dope on the Social of the Queen Esther Circle in the basement of the Methodist Episcopal Church, unable to sleep through a meeting of the Common Council on account of the noisy oratory caused by John Smith's application for a permit to build a house; making a note that a tug boat towed two barges loaded with coal up the river, that Mrs. Perkins spent a week-end with relatives in Hickville, that John Jones . . . Oh, help! Why go on? Ten years of it! I'm a broken man. God, how I used to pray that our Congressman would commit suicide, or the Mayor murder his wife—just to be able to write a real story!

EILEEN [*With a smile*]: Is it as bad as that? But weren't there other things in the town—outside your work—that were interesting?

MURRAY [*Decidedly*]: Nope. Never anything new—and I knew everyone and everything in town by heart years ago. [*With sudden bitterness.*] Oh, it was my own fault. Why didn't I get out of it? Well, I didn't. I was always going to—tomorrow—and tomorrow never came. I got in a rut—and stayed put. People seem to get that way,

somehow—in that town. It's in the air. All the boys I grew up with—nearly all, at least—took root in the same way. It took pleurisy, followed by T. B., to blast me loose.

EILEEN [*Wonderingly*]: But—your family—didn't they live there?

MURRAY: I haven't much of a family left. My mother died when I was a kid. My father—he was a lawyer—died when I was nineteen, just about to go to college. He left nothing, so I went to work on the paper instead. And there I've been ever since. I've two sisters, respectably married and living in another part of the state. We don't get along—but they are paying for me here, so I suppose I've no kick. [*Cynically.*] A family wouldn't have changed things. From what I've seen that blood-thicker-than-water dope is all wrong. It's thinner than table-d'hôte soup. You may have seen a bit of that truth in your own case already.

EILEEN [*Shocked*]: How can you say that? You don't know . . .

MURRAY: Don't I, though? Wait till you've been here three months or four—when the gap you left has been comfortably filled. You'll see then!

EILEEN [*Angrily, her lips trembling*]: You must

be crazy to say such things! [*Fighting back her tears.*] Oh, I think it's hateful—when you see how badly I feel!

MURRAY [*In acute confusion. Stammering*]: Look here, Miss Carmody, I didn't mean to . . . Listen—don't feel mad at me, please. My tongue ran away with me. I was only talking. I'm like that. You mustn't take it seriously.

EILEEN [*Still resentful*]: I don't see how you can talk. You don't—you can't know about these things—when you've just said you had no family of your own, really.

MURRAY [*Eager to return to her good graces*]: No. Of course I don't know. I was just talking regardless for the fun of listening to it.

EILEEN [*After a pause*]: Hasn't either of your sisters any children?

MURRAY: One of them has—two of them—ugly, squally little brats.

EILEEN [*Disapprovingly*]: You don't like babies?

MURRAY [*Bluntly*]: No. [*Then with a grin at her shocked face.*] I don't get them. They're something I can't seem to get acquainted with.

EILEEN [*With a smile, indulgently*]: You're a funny person. [*Then with a superior motherly air.*]

No wonder you couldn't understand how badly I feel. [*With a tender smile.*] I've four of them—my brothers and sisters—though they're not what you'd call babies, except to me. Billy is fourteen, Nora eleven, Tom ten, and even little Mary is eight. I've been a mother to them now for a whole year—ever since our mother died. [*Sadly.*] And I don't know how they'll ever get along while I'm away.

MURRAY [*Cynically*]: Oh, they'll . . . [*He checks what he was going to say and adds lamely*] . . . get along somehow.

EILEEN [*With the same superior tone*]: It's easy for you to say that. You don't know how children grow to depend on you for everything. You're not a woman.

MURRAY [*With a grin*]: Are you? [*Then with a chuckle.*] You're as old as the pyramids, aren't you? I feel like a little boy. Won't you adopt me, too?

EILEEN [*Flushing, with a shy smile*]: Someone ought to. [*Quickly changing the subject.*] Do you know, I can't get over what you said about hating your work so. I should think it would be wonderful—to be able to write things.

MURRAY: My job had nothing to do with writ-

ing. To write—really write—yes, that's something worth trying for. That's what I've always meant to have a stab at. I've run across ideas enough for stories—that sounded good to me, anyway. [*With a forced laugh.*] But—like everything else—I never got down to it. I started one or two—but—either I thought I didn't have the time or . . . [*He shrugs his shoulders.*]

EILEEN: Well, you've plenty of time now, haven't you?

MURRAY [*Instantly struck by this suggestion*]: You mean . . . I could write—up here? [*She nods. His face lights up with enthusiasm.*] Say! That is an idea! Thank you! I'd never have had sense enough to have thought of that myself. [*EILEEN flushes with pleasure.*] Sure there's time—nothing but time up here . . .

EILEEN: Then you seriously think you'll try it?

MURRAY [*Determinedly*]: Yes. Why not? I've got to try and do something real sometime, haven't I? I've no excuse not to, now. My mind isn't sick.

EILEEN [*Excitedly*]: That'll be wonderful!

MURRAY [*Confidently*]: Listen. I've had ideas for a series of short stories for the last couple of years—small town experiences, some of them actual. I

know that life—too darn well. I ought to be able to write about it. And if I can sell one—to the *Post*, say—I'm sure they'd take the others, too. And then . . . I should worry! It'd be easy sailing. But you must promise to help—play critic for me—read them and tell me where they're rotten.

EILEEN [*Pleased but protesting*]: Oh, no, I'd never dare. I don't know anything . . .

MURRAY: Yes, you do. You're the public. And you started me off on this thing—if I'm really starting at last. So you've got to back me up now. [*Suddenly.*] Say, I wonder if they'd let me have a typewriter up here?

EILEEN: It'd be fine if they would. I'd like to have one, too—to practice. I learned stenography at business college and then I had a position for a year—before my mother died.

MURRAY: We could hire one—I could. I don't see why they wouldn't allow it. I'm to be sent to one of the men's shacks within the next few days, and you'll be shipped to one of the women's cottages within ten days. You're not sick enough to be kept here in bed, I'm sure of that. .

EILEEN: I . . . I don't know . . .

MURRAY: Here! None of that! You just think

you're not and you won't be. Say, I'm keen on that typewriter idea. They couldn't kick if we only used it during recreation periods. I could have it a week, and then you a week.

EILEEN [*Eagerly*]: And I could type your stories after you've written them! I *could* help that way.

MURRAY [*Smiling*]: But I'm quite able . . . [*Then seeing how interested she is he adds hurriedly.*] That'd be great! It'd save so much time. I've always been a bum at a machine. And I'd be willing to pay whatever . . . [MISS GILPIN *enters from the rear and walks toward them.*]

EILEEN [*Quickly*]: Oh, no! I'd be glad to get the practice. I wouldn't accept . . . [*She coughs slightly.*]

MURRAY [*With a laugh*]: Maybe, after you've read my stuff, you won't type it at any price.

MISS GILPIN: Miss Carmody, may I speak to you for a moment, please. [*She takes EILEEN aside and talks to her in low tones of admonition. EILEEN's face falls. She nods a horrified acquiescence. MISS GILPIN leaves her and goes into the office, rear.*]

MURRAY [*As EILEEN comes back. Noticing her perturbation. Kindly*]: Well? Now, what's the trouble?

EILEEN [*Her lips trembling*]: She told me I

mustn't forget to shield my mouth with my handkerchief when I cough.

MURRAY [*Consolingly*]: Yes, that's one of the rules, you know.

EILEEN [*Falteringly*]: She said they'd give me—a cup to carry around . . . [*She stops, shuddering.*]

MURRAY [*Easily*]: It's not as horrible as it sounds. They're only little paste-board things you carry in your pocket.

EILEEN [*As if speaking to herself*]: It's so horrible. [*She holds out her hand to MURRAY.*] I'm to go to my room now. Good night, Mr. Murray.

MURRAY [*Holding her hand for a moment—earnestly*]: Don't mind your first impressions here. You'll look on everything as a matter of course in a few days. I felt your way at first. [*He drops her hand and shakes his finger at her.*] Mind your guardian, now! [*She forces a trembling smile.*] See you at breakfast. Good night. [*EILEEN goes out to the hall in rear. MISS HOWARD comes in from the door just after her, carrying a glass of milk.*]

MISS HOWARD: Almost bedtime, Mr. Murray. Here's your diet. [*He takes the glass. She smiles at him provokingly.*] Well, is it love at first sight, Mr. Murray?

MURRAY [*With a grin*]: Sure thing! You can consider yourself heartlessly jilted. [*He turns and raises his glass toward the door through which EILEEN has just gone, as if toasting her.*]

“A glass of milk, and thou

Coughing beside me in the wilderness . . .

Ah . . . wilderness were Paradise enow!”

[*He takes a sip of milk.*]

MISS HOWARD [*Peevishly*]: That’s old stuff, Mr. Murray. A patient at Saranac wrote that parody.

MURRAY [*Maliciously*]: Aha, you’ve discovered it’s a parody, have you, you sly minx! [*Miss HOWARD turns from him huffily and walks back towards the office, her chin in the air.*]

[*The Curtain Falls*]

ACT II

SCENE ONE

SCENE—*The assembly room of the main building of the sanatorium—early in the morning of a fine day in June, four months later. The room is large, light and airy, painted a fresh white. On the left forward, an armchair. Farther back, a door opening on the main hall. To the rear of this door a pianola on a raised platform. In back of the pianola, a door leading into the office. In the rear wall, a long series of French windows looking out on the lawn, with wooded hills in the far background. Shrubs in flower grow immediately outside the windows. Inside, there is a row of potted plants. In the right wall, rear, four windows. Farther forward, a long, well-filled bookcase, and a doorway leading into the dining room. Following the walls, but about five feet out from them a stiff line of chairs placed closely against each other forms a sort of right-angled auditorium of which the large, square*

table that stands at center, forward, would seem to be the stage.

From the dining room comes the clatter of dishes, the confused murmur of many voices, male and female—all the mingled sounds of a crowd of people at a meal.

After the curtain rises, DOCTOR STANTON enters from the hall, followed by a visitor, MR. SLOAN, and the assistant physician, DOCTOR SIMMS. DOCTOR STANTON is a handsome man of forty-five or so with a grave, care-lined, studious face lightened by a kindly, humorous smile. His gray eyes, saddened by the suffering they have witnessed, have the sympathetic quality of real understanding. The look they give is full of companionship, the courage-renewing, human companionship of a hope which is shared. He speaks with a slight Southern accent, soft and slurring. DOCTOR SIMMS is a tall, angular young man with a long, sallow face and a sheepish, self-conscious grin. MR. SLOAN is fifty, short and stout, well dressed—one of the successful business men whose endowments have made the Hill Farm a possibility.

STANTON [*As they enter*]: This is what you might

call the general assembly room, Mr. Sloan—where the patients of both sexes are allowed to congregate together after meals, for diets, and in the evening.

SLOAN [*Looking around him*]: Couldn't be more pleasant, I must say—light and airy. [*He walks where he can take a peep into the dining room.*] Ah, they're all at breakfast, I see.

STANTON [*Smiling*]: Yes, and with no lack of appetite, let me tell you. [*With a laugh of proud satisfaction.*] They'd sure eat us out of house and home at one sitting, if we'd give them the opportunity. [*To his assistant.*] Wouldn't they, Doctor?

SIMMS [*With his abashed grin*]: You bet they would, sir.

SLOAN [*With a smile*]: That's fine. [*With a nod toward the dining room.*] The ones in there are the sure cures, aren't they?

STANTON [*A shadow coming over his face*]: Strictly speaking, there are no sure cures in this disease, Mr. Sloan. When we permit a patient to return to take up his or her activities in the world, the patient is what we call an arrested case. The disease is overcome, quiescent; the wound is healed over. It's then up to the patient to so take care of

himself that this condition remains permanent. It isn't hard for them to do this, usually. Just ordinary, bull-headed common sense—added to what they've learned here—is enough for their safety. And the precautions we teach them to take don't diminish their social usefulness in the slightest, either, as I can prove by our statistics of former patients. [*With a smile.*] It's rather early in the morning for statistics, though.

SLOAN [*With a wave of the hand*]: Oh, you needn't. Your reputation in that respect, Doctor . . . [STANTON *inclines his head in acknowledgment.* SLOAN *jerks his thumb toward the dining room.*] But the ones in there *are* getting well, aren't they?

STANTON: To all appearances, yes. You don't dare swear to it, though. Sometimes, just when a case looks most favorably, there's a sudden, unforeseen breakdown and they have to be sent back to bed, or, if it's very serious, back to the Infirmary again. These are the exceptions, however, not the rule. You can bank on most of those eaters being out in the world and usefully employed within six months.

SLOAN: You couldn't say more than that. [*Ab-*

ruptly.] But—the unfortunate ones—do you have many deaths?

STANTON [*With a frown*]: No. We're under a very hard, almost cruel imperative which prevents that. If, at the end of six months, a case shows no response to treatment, continues to go down hill—if, in a word, it seems hopeless—we send them away, to one of the State Farms if they have no private means. [*Apologetically.*] You see, this sanatorium is overcrowded and has a long waiting list most of the time of others who demand their chance for life. We have to make places for them. We have no time to waste on incurables. There are other places for them—and sometimes, too, a change is beneficial and they pick up in new surroundings. You never can tell. But we're bound by the rule. It may seem cruel—but it's as near justice to all concerned as we can come.

SLOAN [*Soberly*]: I see. [*His eyes fall on the pianola—in surprise.*] Ah—a piano.

STANTON [*Replying to the other's thought*]: Yes, the patients play and sing. [*With a smile.*] If you'd call the noise they make by those terms. They'd dance, too, if we permitted it. There's only one

song taboo—Home, Sweet Home. We forbid that—for obvious reasons.

SLOAN: I see. [*With a final look around.*] Did I understand you to say this is the only place where the sexes are permitted to mingle?

STANTON: Yes, sir.

SLOAN [*With a smile*]: Not much chance for a love affair, then.

STANTON [*Seriously*]: We do our best to prevent them. We even have a strict rule which allows us to step in and put a stop to any intimacy which grows beyond the casual. People up here, Mr. Sloan, are expected to put aside all ideas except the one—getting well.

SLOAN [*Somewhat embarrassed*]: A damn good rule, too, I should say, under the circumstances.

STANTON [*With a laugh*]: Yes, we're strictly anti-Cupid, sir, from top to bottom. [*Turning to the door to the hall.*] And now, if you don't mind, Mr. Sloan, I'm going to turn you footloose to wander about the grounds on an unconducted tour. Today is my busy morning—Saturday. We weigh each patient immediately after breakfast.

SLOAN: Every week?

STANTON: Every Saturday. You see we depend

on fluctuations in weight to tell us a lot about the patient's condition. If they gain, or stay at normal, all's usually well. If they lose week after week without any reason we can definitely point to, we keep careful watch. It's a sign that something's wrong. We're forewarned by it and on our guard.

SLOAN [*With a smile*]: Well, I'm certainly learning things. [*He turns to the door.*] And you just shoo me off wherever you please and go on with the good work. I'll be glad of a ramble in the open on such a glorious morning.

STANTON: After the weighing is over, sir, I'll be free to . . . [*His words are lost as the three go out. A moment later, EILEEN enters from the dining room. She has grown stouter, her face has more of a healthy, out-of-door color, but there is still about her the suggestion of being worn down by a burden too oppressive for her courage. She is dressed in shirtwaist and dark skirt. She goes to the armchair, left forward, and sinks down on it. She is evidently in a state of nervous depression; she twists her fingers together in her lap; her eyes stare sadly before her; she clenches her upper lip with her teeth to prevent its trembling. She has hardly regained control over herself when STEPHEN MURRAY comes in hurriedly from the dining room*

and, seeing her at his first glance, walks quickly over to her chair. He is the picture of health, his figure has filled out solidly, his tanned face beams with suppressed exultation.]

MURRAY [*Excitedly*]: Eileen! I saw you leave your table. I've something to tell you. I didn't get a chance last night after the mail came. You'd gone to the cottage. Just listen, Eileen—it's too good to be true—but on that mail—guess what?

EILEEN [*Forgetting her depression—with an excited smile*]: I know! You've sold your story!

MURRAY [*Triumphantly*]: Go to the head of the class. What d'you know about that for luck! My first, too—and only the third magazine I sent it to! [*He cuts a joyful caper.*]

EILEEN [*Happily*]: Isn't that wonderful, Stephen! But I knew all the time you would. The story's so good.

MURRAY: Well, you might have known but I didn't think there was a chance in the world. And as for being good . . . [*With superior air*] . . . wait till I turn loose with the real big ones, the kind I'm going to write. Then I'll make them sit up and take notice. They can't stop me now. This money gives me a chance to sit back and do what I please for a

while. And I haven't told you the best part. The editor wrote saying how much he liked the yarn and asked me for more of the same kind.

EILEEN: And you've the three others about the same person—just as good, too! Why, you'll sell them all! [*She claps her hands delightedly.*]

MURRAY: And I can send them out right away. They're all typed, thanks to you. That's what's brought me luck, I know. I never had a bit by myself. [*Then, after a quick glance around to make sure they are alone, he bends down and kisses her.*] There! a token of gratitude—even if it is against the rules.

EILEEN [*Flushing—with timid happiness*]: Stephen! You mustn't! They'll see.

MURRAY [*Boldly*]: Let them!

EILEEN: But you know—they've warned us against being so much together, already.

MURRAY: Let them! We'll be out of this prison soon. [*EILEEN shakes her head sadly but he does not notice.*] Oh, I wish you could leave when I do. We'd have some celebration together.

EILEEN [*Her lips trembling*]: I was thinking last night—that you'd soon be going away. You look so well. Do you think—they'll let you go—soon?

MURRAY: You bet I do. I'm bound to go now.

It's ridiculous keeping me here when I'm as healthy as a pig. I caught Stanton in the hall last night and asked him if I could go.

EILEEN [*Anxiously*]: What did he say?

MURRAY: He only smiled and said: "We'll see if you gain weight tomorrow." As if that mattered now! Why, I'm way above normal as it is! But you know Stanton—always putting you off. But I could tell by the way he said it he'd be willing to consider . . .

EILEEN [*Slowly*]: Then—if you gain today . . .

MURRAY: He'll let me go. Yes, I know he will. I'm going to insist on it.

EILEEN: Then—you'll leave . . .?

MURRAY: Right away. The minute I can get packed.

EILEEN [*Trying to force a smile*]: Oh, I'm so glad—for your sake; but—I'm selfish—it'll be so lonely here without you.

MURRAY [*Consolingly*]: You'll be going away yourself before long. [EILEEN *shakes her head. He goes on without noticing, wrapped in his own success.*] Oh, Eileen, you can't imagine all it opens up for me—selling that story. I don't have to go back home to stagnate. I can go straight to New York,

and live, and meet real people who are doing things. I can take my time, and try and do the work I hope to. [*Feelingly.*] You don't know how grateful I am to you, Eileen—how you've helped me. Oh, I don't mean just the typing, I mean your encouragement, your faith! I'd never have had guts enough to stick to it myself. The stories would never have been written if it hadn't been for you.

EILEEN [*Choking back a sob*]: I didn't do—anything.

MURRAY [*Staring down at her—with rough kindness*]: Here, here, that'll never do! You're not weeping about it, are you, silly? [*He pats her on the shoulder.*] What's the matter, Eileen? You didn't eat a thing this morning. I was watching you. [*With kindly severity.*] That's no way to gain weight, you know. You'll have to feed up. Do you hear what your guardian commands, eh?

EILEEN [*With dull hopelessness*]: I know I'll lose again. I've been losing steadily the past three weeks.

MURRAY: Here! Don't you dare talk that way! I won't stand for it. Why, you've been picking up wonderfully—until just lately. You've made such a game fight for four months. Even the old Doc

has told you how much he admired your pluck, and how much better you were getting. You're not going to quit now, are you?

EILEEN [*Despairingly*]: Oh, I don't care! I don't care—now.

MURRAY: Now? What do you mean by that? What's happened to make things any different?

EILEEN [*Evasively*]: Oh—nothing. Don't ask me, Stephen.

MURRAY [*With sudden anger*]: I don't have to ask you. I can guess. Another letter from home—or from that ass, eh?

EILEEN [*Shaking her head*]: No, it isn't that. [*She looks at him as if imploring him to comprehend.*]

MURRAY [*Furiously*]: Of course, you'd deny it. You always do. But don't you suppose I've got eyes? It's been the same damn thing all the time you've been here. After every nagging letter—thank God they don't write often any more!—you've been all in; and after their Sunday visits—you can thank God they've been few, too—you're utterly knocked out. It's a shame! The selfish swine!

EILEEN: Stephen!

MURRAY [*Relentlessly*]: Don't be sentimental, Eileen. You know it's true. From what you've told me of their letters, their visits,—from what I've seen and suspected—they've done nothing but worry and torment you and do their best to keep you from getting well.

EILEEN [*Faintly*]: You're not fair, Stephen.

MURRAY: Rot! When it isn't your father grumbling about expense, it's the kids, or that stupid housekeeper, or that slick Aleck, Nicholls, with his cowardly lies. Which is it this time?

EILEEN [*Pitifully*]: None of them.

MURRAY [*Explosively*]: But him, especially—the dirty cad! Oh, I've got a rich notion to pay a call on that gentleman when I leave and tell him what I think of him.

EILEEN [*Quickly*]: No—you mustn't ever! He's not to blame. If you knew . . . [*She stops, lowering her eyes in confusion.*]

MURRAY [*Roughly*]: Knew what? You make me sick, Eileen—always finding excuses for him. I never could understand what a girl like you could see . . . But what's the use? I've said all this before. You're wasting yourself on a . . . [*Rudely.*] Love

must be blind. And yet you say you don't love him, really?

EILEEN [*Shaking her head—helplessly*]: But I do—like Fred. We've been good friends so many years. I don't want to hurt him—his pride . . .

MURRAY: That's the same as answering no to my question. Then, if you don't love him, why don't you write and tell him to go to . . . break it off? [EILEEN *bows her head but doesn't reply. Irritated*, MURRAY *continues brutally*.] Are you afraid it would break his heart? Don't be a fool! The only way you could do that would be to deprive him of his meals.

EILEEN [*Springing to her feet—distractedly*]: Please stop, Stephen! You're cruel! And you've been so kind—the only real friend I've had up here. Don't spoil it all now.

MURRAY [*Remorsefully*]: I'm sorry, Eileen. I was only talking. I won't say another word. [*Irritably*.] Still, someone ought to say or do something to put a stop to . . .

EILEEN [*With a broken laugh*]: Never mind. Everything will stop—soon, now!

MURRAY [*Suspiciously*]: What do you mean?

EILEEN [*With an attempt at a careless tone*]: Noth-

ing. If you can't see . . . [*She turns to him with sudden intensity.*] Oh, Stephen, if you only knew how wrong you are about everything you've said. It's all true; but it isn't that—any of it—any more . . . that's . . . Oh, I can't tell you!

MURRAY [*With great interest*]: Please do, Eileen!

EILEEN [*With a helpless laugh*]: No.

MURRAY: Please tell me what it is! Let me help you.

EILEEN: No. It wouldn't be any use, Stephen.

MURRAY [*Offended*]: Why do you say that? Haven't I helped before?

EILEEN: Yes—but this . . .

MURRAY: Come now! 'Fess up! What is "this"?

EILEEN: No. I couldn't speak of it here, anyway. They'll all be coming out soon.

MURRAY [*Insistently*]: Then when? Where?

EILEEN: Oh, I don't know—perhaps never, nowhere. I don't know . . . Sometime before you leave, maybe.

MURRAY: But I may go tomorrow morning—if I gain weight and Stanton lets me.

EILEEN [*Sadly*]: Yes, I was forgetting—you were going right away. [*Dully.*] Then nowhere, I suppose—never. [*Glancing toward the dining room.*]

They're all getting up. Let's not talk about it any more—now.

MURRAY [*Stubbornly*]: But you'll tell me later, Eileen? You must.

EILEEN [*Vaguely*]: Perhaps. It depends . . . [*The patients, about forty in number, straggle in from the dining room by twos and threes, chatting in low tones. The men and women with few exceptions separate into two groups, the women congregating in the left right angle of chairs, the men sitting or standing in the right angle. In appearance, most of the patients are tanned, healthy, and cheerful looking. The great majority are under middle age. Their clothes are of the cheap, ready-made variety. They are all distinctly of the wage-earning class. They might well be a crowd of cosmopolitan factory workers gathered together after a summer vacation. A hollow-chestedness and a tendency to round shoulders may be detected as a common characteristic. A general air of tension, marked by frequent bursts of laughter in too high a key, seems to pervade the throng. MURRAY and EILEEN, as if to avoid contact with the others, come over to the right in front of the dining-room door.*]

MURRAY [*In a low voice*]: Listen to them laugh. Did you ever notice—perhaps it's my imagination

—how forced they act on Saturday mornings before they're weighed?

EILEEN [*Dully*]: No.

MURRAY: Can't you tell me that secret now? No one'll hear.

EILEEN [*Vehemently*]: No, no, how could I? Don't speak of it! [*A sudden silence falls on all the groups at once. Their eyes, by a common impulse, turn quickly toward the door to the hall.*]

A WOMAN [*Nervously—as if this moment's silent pause oppressed her*]: Play something, Peters. They ain't coming yet. [PETERS, *a stupid-looking young fellow with a sly, twisted smirk which gives him the appearance of perpetually winking his eye, detaches himself from a group on the right. All join in with urging exclamations: "Go on, Peters! Go to it! Pedal up, Pete! Give us a rag! That's the boy, Peters!" etc.*]

PETERS: Sure, if I got time. [*He goes to the pianola and puts in a roll. The mingled conversation and laughter bursts forth again as he sits on the bench and starts pedaling.*]

MURRAY [*Disgustedly*]: It's sure good to think I won't have to listen to that old tin-pan being banged much longer! [*The music interrupts him—a quick rag. The patients brighten, hum, whistle,*

sway their heads or tap their feet in time to the tune. DOCTOR STANTON and DOCTOR SIMMS appear in the doorway from the hall. All eyes are turned on them.]

STANTON [*Raising his voice*]: They all seem to be here, Doctor. We might as well start. [MRS. TURNER, the matron, comes in behind them—a stout, motherly, capable-looking woman with gray hair. She hears STANTON'S remark.]

MRS. TURNER: And take temperatures after, Doctor?

STANTON: Yes, Mrs. Turner. I think that's better today.

MRS. TURNER: All right, Doctor. [STANTON and the assistant go out. MRS. TURNER advances a step or so into the room and looks from one group of patients to the other, inclining her head and smiling benevolently. All force smiles and nod in recognition of her greeting. PETERS, at the pianola, lets the music slow down, glancing questioningly at the matron to see if she is going to order it stopped. Then, encouraged by her smile, his feet pedal harder than ever.]

MURRAY: Look at old Mrs. Grundy's eyes

pinned on us! She'll accuse us of being too familiar again, the old wench!

EILEEN: Sssh. You're wrong. She's looking at me, not at us.

MURRAY: At you? Why?

EILEEN: I ran a temperature yesterday. It must have been over a hundred last night.

MURRAY [*With consoling skepticism*]: You're always suffering for trouble, Eileen. How do you know you ran a temp? You didn't see the stick, I suppose?

EILEEN: No—but—I could tell. I felt feverish and chilly. It must have been way up.

MURRAY: Bosh! If it was you'd have been sent to bed.

EILEEN: That's why she's looking at me. [*Pitiously.*] Oh, I do hope I won't be sent back to bed! I don't know what I'd do. If I could only gain this morning. If my temp has only gone down! [*Hopelessly.*] But I feel . . . I didn't sleep a wink—thinking . . .

MURRAY [*Roughly*]: You'll persuade yourself you've got leprosy in a second. Don't be a nut! It's all imagination, I tell you. You'll gain. Wait and see if you don't. [EILEEN *shakes her head.* *A*

metallic rumble and jangle comes from the hallway. Everyone turns in that direction with nervous expectancy.]

MRS. TURNER [*Admonishingly*]: Mr. Peters!

PETERS: Yes, ma'am. [*He stops playing and rejoins the group of men on the right. In the midst of a silence broken only by hushed murmurs of conversation, DOCTOR STANTON appears in the hall doorway. He turns to help his assistant wheel in a Fairbanks scale on castors. They place the scale against the wall immediately to the rear of the doorway. DOCTOR SIMMS adjusts it to a perfect balance.*]

DOCTOR STANTON [*Takes a pencil from his pocket and opens the record book he has in his hand*]: All ready, Doctor?

DOCTOR SIMMS: Just a second, sir. [*A chorus of coughs comes from the impatient crowd, and handkerchiefs are hurriedly produced to shield mouths.*]

MURRAY [*With a nervous smile*]: Well, we're all set. Here's hoping!

EILEEN: You'll gain, I'm sure you will. You look so well.

MURRAY: Oh—I—I wasn't thinking of myself, I'm a sure thing. I was betting on you. I've simply got to gain today, when so much depends on it.

EILEEN: Yes, I hope you . . . [*She falters brokenly and turns away from him.*]

DOCTOR SIMMS [*Straightening up*]: All ready, Doctor.

STANTON [*Nods and glances at his book—without raising his voice—distinctly*]: Mrs. Abner. [*A middle-aged woman comes and gets on the scale. SIMMS adjusts it to her weight of the previous week which STANTON reads to him from the book in a low voice, and weighs her.*]

MURRAY [*With a relieved sigh*]: They're off. [*Noticing EILEEN's downcast head and air of dejection.*] Here! Buck up, Eileen! Old Lady Grundy's watching you—and it's your turn in a second. [*EILEEN raises her head and forces a frightened smile. MRS ABNER gets down off the scale with a pleased grin. She has evidently gained. She rejoins the group of women, chattering volubly in low tones. Her exultant "gained half a pound" can be heard. The other women smile their perfunctory congratulations, their eyes absent-minded, intent on their own worries. STANTON writes down the weight in the book.*]

STANTON: Miss Bailey. [*A young girl goes to the scales.*]

MURRAY: Bailey looks badly, doesn't she?

EILEEN [*Her lips trembling*]: She's been losing, too.

MURRAY: Well, you're going to gain today. Remember, now!

EILEEN [*With a feeble smile*]: I'll try to obey your orders. [*MISS BAILEY gets down off the scales. Her eyes are full of despondency although she tries to make a brave face of it, forcing a laugh as she joins the women. They stare at her with pitying looks and murmur consoling phrases.*]

EILEEN: She's lost again. Oh, I wish I didn't have to get weighed . . .

STANTON: Miss Carmody. [*EILEEN starts nervously.*]

MURRAY [*As she leaves him*]: Remember now! Break the scales! [*She walks quickly to the scales, trying to assume an air of defiant indifference. The balance stays down as she steps up. EILEEN's face shows her despair at this. SIMMS weighs her and gives the poundage in a low voice to STANTON. EILEEN steps down mechanically, then hesitates as if not knowing where to turn, her anguished eyes flitting from one group to another.*]

MURRAY [*Savagely*]: Damn! [*DOCTOR STANTON*

writes the figures in his book, glances sharply at EILEEN, and then nods significantly to MRS. TURNER who is standing beside him.]

STANTON [*Calling the next*]: Miss Doeffler. [*Another woman comes to be weighed.*]

MRS. TURNER: Miss Carmody! Will you come here a moment, please?

EILEEN [*Her face growing very pale*]: Yes, Mrs. Turner. [*The heads of the different groups bend together. Their eyes follow EILEEN as they whisper. MRS. TURNER leads her down front, left. Behind them the weighing of the women continues briskly. The great majority have gained. Those who have not have either remained stationary or lost a negligible fraction of a pound. So, as the weighing proceeds, the general air of smiling satisfaction rises among the groups of women. Some of them, their ordeal over, go out through the hall doorway by twos and threes with suppressed laughter and chatter. As they pass behind EILEEN they glance at her with pitying curiosity. DOCTER STANTON'S voice is heard at regular intervals calling the names in alphabetical order: Mrs. Ebling, Miss Finch, Miss Grimes, Miss Haines, Miss Hayes, Miss Jutner, Miss Linowski, Mrs. Marini, Mrs. McCoy, Miss McElroy, Miss Nelson,*

Mrs. Nott, Mrs. O'Brien, Mrs. Olson, Miss Paul, Miss Petrovski, Mrs. Quinn, Miss Roberts, Mrs. Stattler, Miss Unger.]

MRS. TURNER [*Putting her hand on EILEEN'S shoulder—kindly*]: You're not looking so well lately, my dear, do you know it?

EILEEN [*Bravely*]: I feel—fine. [*Her eyes, -as if looking for encouragement, seek MURRAY who is staring at her worriedly.*]

MRS. TURNER [*Gently*]: You lost weight again, you know.

EILEEN: I know—but . . .

MRS. TURNER: This is the fourth week.

EILEEN: I . . . I know it is . . .

MRS. TURNER: I've been keeping my eye on you. You seem—worried. Are you upset about—something we don't know?

EILEEN [*Quickly*]: No, no! I haven't slept much lately. That must be it.

MRS. TURNER: Are you worrying about your condition? Is that what keeps you awake?

EILEEN: No.

MRS. TURNER: You're sure it's not that?

EILEEN: Yes, I'm sure it's not, Mrs. Turner.

MRS. TURNER: I was going to tell you if you

were: Don't do it! You can't expect it to be all smooth sailing. Even the most favorable cases have to expect these little setbacks. A few days' rest in bed will start you on the right trail again.

EILEEN [*In anguish, although she has realized this was coming*]: Bed? Go back to bed? Oh, Mrs. Turner!

MRS. TURNER [*Gently*]: Yes, my dear, Doctor Stanton thinks it best. So when you go back to your cottage . . .

EILEEN: Oh, please—not today—not right away!

MRS. TURNER: You had a temperature and a high pulse yesterday, didn't you realize it? And this morning you look quite feverish. [*She tries to put her hand on EILEEN's forehead but the latter steps away defensively.*]

EILEEN: It's only—not sleeping last night. I was nervous. Oh, I'm sure it'll go away.

MRS. TURNER [*Consolingly*]: When you lie still and have perfect rest, of course it will.

EILEEN [*With a longing look over at MURRAY*]: But not today—please, Mrs. Turner.

MRS. TURNER [*Looking at her keenly*]: There is something upsetting you. You've something on

your mind that you can't tell me, is that it? [EILEEN *maintains a stubborn silence.*] But think—*can't* you tell me? [*With a kindly smile.*] I'm used to other people's troubles. I've been playing mother-confessor to the patients for years now, and I think I've usually been able to help them. Can't you confide in me, child? [EILEEN *drops her eyes but remains silent.* MRS. TURNER *glances meaningfully over at MURRAY who is watching them whenever he thinks the matron is not aware of it—a note of sharp rebuke in her voice.*] I think I can guess your secret, my dear, even if you're too stubborn to tell. This setback is your own fault. You've let other notions become more important to you than the idea of getting well. And you've no excuse for it. After I had to warn you a month ago, I expected *that silliness* to stop instantly.

EILEEN [*Her face flushed—protesting*]: There never was anything. Nothing like that has anything to do with it.

MRS. TURNER [*Skeptically*]: What is it that has, then?

EILEEN [*Lying determinedly*]: It's my family. They keep writing—and worrying me—and . . . That's what it is, Mrs. Turner.

MRS. TURNER [*Not exactly knowing whether to believe this or not—probing the girl with her eyes*]: Your father?

EILEEN: Yes, all of them [*Suddenly seeing a way to discredit all of the matron's suspicions—excitedly.*] And principally the young man I'm engaged to—the one who came to visit me several times . . .

MRS. TURNER [*Surprised*]: So—you're engaged? [EILEEN *nods*. MRS. TURNER *immediately dismisses her suspicions.*] Oh, pardon me. I didn't know that, you see, or I wouldn't . . . [*She pats EILEEN on the shoulder comfortingly.*] Never mind. You'll tell me all about it, won't you?

EILEEN [*Desperately*]: Yes. [*She seems about to go on but the matron interrupts her.*]

MRS. TURNER: Oh, not here, my dear. Not now. Come to my room—let me see—I'll be busy all morning—sometime this afternoon. Will you do that?

EILEEN: Yes. [*Joyfully.*] Then I needn't go to bed right away?

MRS. TURNER: No—on one condition. You mustn't take any exercise. Stay in your recliner all day and rest and remain in bed tomorrow morning.

And promise me you will rest and not worry any more about things we can easily fix up between us.

EILEEN: I promise, Mrs. Turner.

MRS. TURNER [*Smiling in dismissal*]: Very well, then. I must speak to Miss Bailey. I'll see you this afternoon.

EILEEN: Yes, Mrs. Turner. [*The matron goes to the rear where MISS BAILEY is sitting with MRS. ABNER. She beckons to MISS BAILEY who gets up with a scared look, and they go to the far left corner of the room. EILEEN stands for a moment hesitating—then starts to go to MURRAY, but just at this moment PETERS comes forward and speaks to MURRAY.*]

PETERS [*With his sly twisted grin*]: Say, Carmody musta lost fierce. Did yuh see the Old Woman handin' her an earful? Sent her back to bed, I betcha. What d'yuh think?

MURRAY [*Impatiently, showing his dislike*]: How the hell do I know?

PETERS [*Sneeringly*]: Huh, you don't know nothin' 'bout her, I s'pose? Where d'yuh get that stuff? Think yuh're kiddin' me?

MURRAY [*With cold rage before which the other slinks away*]: Peters, the more I see of you the bet-

ter I like a skunk! If it wasn't for other people losing weight you couldn't get any joy out of life, could you? [*Roughly.*] Get away from me! [*He makes a threatening gesture.*]

PETERS [*Beating a snarling retreat*]: Wait'n' see if yuh don't lose too, yuh stuck-up boob! [*Seeing that MURRAY is alone again, EILEEN starts toward him but this time she is intercepted by MRS. ABNER who stops on her way out. The weighing of the women is now finished, and that of the men, which proceeds much quicker, begins.*]

DOCTOR STANTON: Anderson! [*ANDERSON comes to the scales. The men all move down to the left to wait their turn, with the exception of MURRAY, who remains by the dining-room door, fidgeting impatiently, anxious for a word with EILEEN.*]

MRS. ABNER [*Taking EILEEN's arm*]: Coming over to the cottage, dearie?

EILEEN: Not just this minute, Mrs. Abner. I have to wait . . .

MRS. ABNER: For the Old Woman? You lost today, didn't you? Is she sendin' you to bed, the old devil?

EILEEN: Yes, I'm afraid I'll have to . . .

MRS. ABNER: She's a mean one, ain't she? I

gained this week—half a pound. Lord, I'm gittin' fat! All my clothes are gittin' too small for me. Don't know what I'll do. Did you lose much, dearie?

EILEEN: Three pounds.

MRS. ABNER: Ain't that awful! [*Hastening to make up for this thoughtless remark.*] All the same, what's three pounds! You can git them back in a week after you're resting more. You been runnin' a temp, too, ain't you? [EILEEN *nods.*] Don't worry about it, dearie. It'll go down. Worryin's the worst. Me, I don't never worry none. [*She chuckles with satisfaction—then soberly.*] I just been talkin' with Bailey. She's got to go to bed, too, I guess. She lost two pounds. She ain't runnin' no temp though.

STANTON: Barnes! [*Another man comes to the scales.*]

MRS. ABNER [*In a mysterious whisper*]: Look at Mr. Murray, dearie. Ain't he nervous today? I don't know as I blame him, either. I heard the doctor said he'd let him go home if he gained today. Is it true, d'you know?

EILEEN [*Dully*]: I don't know.

MRS. ABNER: Gosh, I wish it was me! My old

man's missin' me like the dickens, he writes. [*She starts to go.*] You'll be over to the cottage in a while, won't you? Me'n' you'll have a game of casino, eh?

EILEEN [*Happy at this deliverance*]: Yes, I'll be glad to.

STANTON: Cordero! [*MRS. ABNER goes out. EILEEN again starts toward MURRAY but this time FLYNN, a young fellow with a brick-colored, homely, good-natured face, and a shaven-necked haircut, slouches back to MURRAY. EILEEN is brought to a halt in front of the table where she stands, her face working with nervous strain, clasping and unclasping her trembling hands.*]

FLYNN [*Curiously*]: Say, Steve, what's this bull about the Doc lettin' yuh beat it if yuh gain today? Is it straight goods?

MURRAY: He said he might, that's all. [*Impatiently.*] How the devil did that story get traveling around?

FLYNN [*With a grin*]: Wha' d'yuh expect with this gang of skirts chewin' the fat? Well, here's hopin' yuh come home a winner, Steve.

MURRAY [*Gratefully*]: Thanks. [*With confidence.*]

Oh, I'll gain all right; but whether he'll let me go or not . . . [*He shrugs his shoulders.*]

FLYNN: Make 'em behave. I wisht Stanton'd ask waivers on me. [*With a laugh.*] I oughter gain a ton today. I ate enough spuds for breakfast to plant a farm.

STANTON: Flynn!

FLYNN: Me to the plate! [*He strides to the scales.*]

MURRAY: Good luck! [*He starts to join EILEEN but MISS BAILEY, who has finished her talk with MRS. TURNER, who goes out to the hall, approaches EILEEN at just this moment. MURRAY stops in his tracks, fuming. He and EILEEN exchange a glance of helpless annoyance.*]

MISS BAILEY [*Her thin face full of the satisfaction of misery finding company—plucks at EILEEN's sleeve*]: Say, Carmody, she sent you back to bed, too, didn't she?

EILEEN [*Absent-mindedly*]: I suppose . . .

MISS BAILEY: You suppose? Don't you know? Of course she did. I got to go, too. [*Pulling EILEEN's sleeve.*] Come on. Let's get out of here. I hate this place, don't you?

STANTON [*Calling the next*]: Hopper!

FLYNN [*Shouts to MURRAY as he is going out to*

the hall): I hit 'er for a two-bagger, Steve. Come on now, Bo, and bring me home! 'Atta boy! [*Grinning gleefully, he slouches out. DOCTOR STANTON and all the patients laugh.*]

MISS BAILEY [*With irritating persistence*]: Come on, Carmody. You've got to go to bed, too.

EILEEN [*At the end of her patience—releasing her arm from the other's grasp*]: Let me alone, will you? I don't have to go to bed now—not till to-morrow morning.

MISS BAILEY [*Despairingly, as if she couldn't believe her ears*]: You don't have to go to bed?

EILEEN: Not now—no.

MISS BAILEY [*In a whining rage*]: Why not? You've been running a temp, too, and I haven't! You must have a pull, that's what! It isn't fair. I'll bet you lost more than I did, too! What right have you got . . . Well, I'm not going to bed if you don't. Wait 'n' see!

EILEEN [*Turning away revolted*]: Go away! Leave me alone, please.

STANTON: Lowenstein!

MISS BAILEY [*Turns to the hall door, whining*]: All right for you! I'm going to find out. It isn't square. I'll write home. [*She disappears in the hall-*

way. MURRAY strides over to EILEEN whose strength seems to have left her and who is leaning weakly against the table.]

MURRAY: Thank God—at last! Isn't it hell—all these fools! I couldn't get to you. What did Old Lady Grundy have to say to you? I saw her giving me a hard look. Was it about us—the old stuff? [EILEEN nods with downcast eyes.] What did she say? Never mind now. You can tell me in a minute. It's my turn next. [His eyes glance toward the scales.]

EILEEN [Intensely]: Oh, Stephen, I wish you weren't going away!

MURRAY [Excitedly]: Maybe I'm not. It's exciting—like gambling—if I win . . .

STANTON: Murray!

MURRAY: Wait here, Eileen. [He goes to the scales. EILEEN keeps her back turned. Her body stiffens rigidly in the intensity of her conflicting emotions. She stares straight ahead, her eyes full of anguish. MURRAY steps on the scales nervously. The balance rod hits the top smartly. He has gained. His face lights up and he heaves a great sigh of relief. EILEEN seems to sense this outcome and her head sinks, her body sags weakly and seems to shrink to a smaller size. MURRAY gets off the scales, his face

beaming with a triumphant smile. DOCTOR STANTON smiles and murmurs something to him in a low voice. MURRAY nods brightly; then turns back to EILEEN.]

STANTON: Nathan! [*Another patient advances to the scales.*]

MURRAY [*Trying to appear casual*]: Well—three rousing cheers! Stanton told me to come to his office at eleven. That means a final exam—and release!

EILEEN [*Dully*]: So you gained?

MURRAY: Three pounds.

EILEEN: Funny—I lost three. [*With a pitiful effort at a smile.*] I hope you gained the ones I lost. [*Her lips tremble.*] So you're surely going away.

MURRAY [*His joy fleeing as he is confronted with her sorrow—slowly*]: It looks that way, Eileen.

EILEEN [*In a trembling whisper broken by rising sobs*]: Oh—I'm so glad—you gained—the ones I lost, Stephen . . . So glad! [*She breaks down, covering her face with her hands, stifling her sobs.*]

MURRAY [*Alarmed*]: Eileen! What's the matter? [*Desperately.*] Stop it! Stanton'll see you!

[*The Curtain Falls*]

ACT II

SCENE TWO

SCENE—*Midnight of the same day. A crossroads near the sanatorium. The main road comes down forward from the right. A smaller road, leading down from the left, joins it toward left, center.*

Dense woods rise sheer from the grass and bramble-grown ditches at the roads' sides. At the junction of the two roads there is a signpost, its arms pointing toward the right and the left, rear. A pile of round stones is at the road corner, left forward. A full moon, riding high overhead, throws the roads into white, shadowless relief and masses the woods into walls of compact blackness. The trees lean heavily together, their branches motionless, unstirred by any trace of wind.

As the curtain rises, EILEEN is discovered standing in the middle of the road, front center. Her face shows white and clear in the bright

moonlight as she stares with anxious expectancy up the road to the left. Her body is fixed in an attitude of rigid immobility as if she were afraid a slightest movement would break the spell of silence and awaken the unknown. She has shrunk instinctively as far away as she can from the mysterious darkness which rises at the road's sides like an imprisoning wall. A sound of hurried footfalls, muffled by the dust, comes from the road she is watching. She gives a startled gasp. Her eyes strain to identify the oncomer. Uncertain, trembling with fright, she hesitates a second; then darts to the side of the road and crouches down in the shadow.

STEPHEN MURRAY *comes down the road from the left. He stops by the sign-post and peers about him. He wears a cap, the peak of which casts his face into shadow. Finally he calls in a low voice:]*

MURRAY: Eileen!

EILEEN [*Coming out quickly from her hiding place—with a glad little cry*]: Stephen! At last! [*She runs to him as if she were going to fling her arms about him but stops abashed. He reaches out and takes her hands.*]

MURRAY: At last? It can't be twelve yet. [*He leads her to the pile of stones on the left.*] I haven't heard the village clock.

EILEEN: I must have come early. It seemed as if I'd been waiting for ages. I was so anxious . . .

MURRAY: How your hands tremble! Were you frightened?

EILEEN [*Forcing a smile*]: A little. The woods are so black—and queer looking. I'm all right now.

MURRAY: Sit down. You must rest. [*In a tone of annoyed reproof.*] I'm going to read you a lecture, young lady. You shouldn't ever have done this—running a temp and . . . Good heavens, don't you want to get well?

EILEEN [*Dully*]: I don't know . . .

MURRAY [*Irritably*]: You make me ill when you talk that way, Eileen. It doesn't sound like you at all. What's come over you lately? Get a grip on yourself, for God's sake. I was—knocked out—when I read the note you slipped me after supper. I didn't get a chance to read it until late, I was so busy packing, and by that time you'd gone to your cottage. If I could have reached you any way I'd have refused to come here, I tell you straight. But I couldn't—and I knew you'd be here waiting—

and—still, I feel guilty. Damn it, this isn't the thing for you! You ought to be in bed asleep. Can't you look out for yourself?

EILEEN [*Humbly*]: Please, Stephen, don't scold me.

MURRAY: How the devil did you ever get the idea—meeting me here at this ungodly hour?

EILEEN: You'd told me about your sneaking out that night to go to the village, and I thought there'd be no harm this one night—the last night.

MURRAY: But I'm well. I've been well. It's different. You . . . Honest, Eileen, you shouldn't lose sleep and tax your strength.

EILEEN: Don't scold me, please. I'll make up for it. I'll rest all the time—after you're gone. I just had to see you some way—somewhere where there weren't eyes and ears on all sides—when you told me after dinner that Doctor Stanton had examined you and said you could go tomorrow . . . [*A clock in the distant village begins striking.*] Sssh! Listen.

MURRAY: That's twelve now. You see I was early. [*In a pause of silence they wait motionlessly until the last mournful note dies in the hushed woods.*]

EILEEN [*In a stifled voice*]: It isn't tomorrow now, is it? It's today—the day you're going.

MURRAY [*Something in her voice making him avert his face and kick at the heap of stones on which she is sitting—brusquely*]: Well, I hope you took precautions so you wouldn't be caught sneaking out.

EILEEN: I did just what you'd told me you did—stuffed the pillows under the clothes so the watchman would think I was there.

MURRAY: None of the patients on your porch saw you leave, did they?

EILEEN: No. They were all asleep.

MURRAY: That's all right, then. I wouldn't trust any of that bunch of women. They'd be only too tickled to squeal on you. [*There is an uncomfortable pause. MURRAY seems waiting for her to speak. He looks about him at the trees, up into the moonlit sky, breathing in the fresh night air with a healthy delight. EILEEN remains with downcast head, staring at the road.*] It's beautiful tonight, isn't it? Worth losing sleep for.

EILEEN [*Dully*]: Yes. [*Another pause—finally she murmurs faintly.*] Are you leaving early?

MURRAY: The ten-forty. Leave the San at ten, I guess.

EILEEN: You're going home?

MURRAY: Home? You mean to the town? No. But I'm going to see my sisters—just to say hello. I've got to, I suppose. I won't stay more than a few days, if I can help it.

EILEEN: I'm sure—I've often felt—you're unjust to your sisters. [*With conviction.*] I'm sure they must both love you.

MURRAY [*Frowning*]: Maybe, in their own way. But what's love without a glimmer of understanding—a nuisance! They have never seen the real me and never have wanted to—that's all.

EILEEN [*As if to herself*]: What is—the real you? [MURRAY *kicks at the stones impatiently without answering.* EILEEN *hastens to change the subject.*] And then you'll go to New York?

MURRAY [*Interested at once*]: Yes. You bet.

EILEEN: And write more?

MURRAY: Not in New York, no. I'm going there to take a vacation, and live, really enjoy myself for a while. I've enough money for that as it is and if the other stories you typed sell—I'll be as rich as Rockefeller. I might even travel . . . No, I've got

to make good with my best stuff first. I'll save the traveling as a reward, a prize to gain. That'll keep me at it. I know what I'll do. When I've had enough of New York, I'll rent a place in the country—some old farmhouse—and live alone there and work. [*Lost in his own plans—with pleasure.*] That's the right idea, isn't it?

EILEEN [*Trying to appear enthused*]: It ought to be fine for your work. [*After a pause*]. They're fine, those stories you wrote here. They're—so much like you. I'd know it was you wrote them even if—I didn't know.

MURRAY [*Pleased*]: Wait till you read the others I'm going to do! [*After a slight pause—with a good-natured grin.*] Here I am talking about myself again! Why don't you call me down when I start that drivel? But you don't know how good it is to have your dreams coming true. It'd make an egotist out of anyone.

EILEEN [*Sadly*]: No. I don't know. But I love to hear you talk of yours.

MURRAY [*With an embarrassed laugh*]: Thanks. Well, I've certainly told you all of them. You're the only one . . . [*He stops and abruptly changes the subject.*] You said in your note that you had some-

thing important to tell me. [*He sits down beside her, crossing his legs.*] Is it about your interview with Old Mrs. Grundy this afternoon?

EILEEN: No, that didn't amount to anything. She seemed mad because I told her so little. I think she guessed I only told her what I did so she'd let me stay up, maybe—your last day,—and to keep her from thinking what she did—about us.

MURRAY [*Quickly, as if he wishes to avoid this subject*]: What is it you wanted to tell me, then?

EILEEN [*Sadly*]: It doesn't seem so important now, somehow. I suppose it was silly of me to drag you out here, just for that. It can't mean anything to you—much.

MURRAY [*Encouragingly*]: How do you know it can't?

EILEEN [*Slowly*]: I only thought—you might like to know.

MURRAY [*Interestedly*]: Know what? What is it? If I can help . . .

EILEEN: No. [*After a moment's hesitation.*] I wrote to him this afternoon.

MURRAY: Him?

EILEEN: The letter you've been advising me to write.

MURRAY [*As if the knowledge of this alarmed him—haltingly*]: You mean—Fred Nicholls?

EILEEN: Yes.

MURRAY [*After a pause—uncomfortably*]: You mean—you broke it all off?

EILEEN: Yes—for good. [*She looks up at his averted face. He remains silent. She continues apprehensively.*] You don't say anything. I thought—you'd be glad. You've always told me it was the honorable thing to do.

MURRAY [*Gruffly*]: I know. I say more than my prayers, damn it! [*With sudden eagerness.*] Have you mailed the letter yet?

EILEEN: Yes. Why?

MURRAY [*Shortly*]: Humph. Oh—nothing.

EILEEN [*With pained disappointment*]: Oh, Stephen, you don't think I did wrong, do you—now—after all you've said?

MURRAY [*Hurriedly*]: Wrong? No, not if you were convinced it was the right thing to do yourself—if you know you don't love him. But I'd hate to think you did it just on my say-so. I shouldn't . . . I didn't mean to interfere. I don't know enough about your relations for my opinion to count.

EILEEN [*Hurt*]: You know all there is to know.

MURRAY: I didn't mean—anything like that. I know you've been frank. But him—I don't know him. How could I, just meeting him once? He may be quite different from my idea. That's what I'm getting at. I don't want to be unfair to him.

EILEEN [*Bitterly scornful*]: You needn't worry. You weren't unfair. And you needn't be afraid you were responsible for my writing. I'd been going to for a long time before you ever spoke.

MURRAY [*With a relieved sigh*]: I'm glad of that—honestly, Eileen. I felt guilty. I shouldn't have knocked him behind his back without knowing him at all.

EILEEN: You said you could read him like a book from his letters I showed you.

MURRAY [*Apologetically*]: I know. I'm a fool.

EILEEN [*Angrily*]: What makes you so considerate of Fred Nicholls all of a sudden? What you thought about him was right.

MURRAY [*Vaguely*]: I don't know. One makes mistakes.

EILEEN [*Assertively*]: Well, I know! You needn't waste pity on him. He'll be only too glad to get my letter. He's been anxious to be free of me ever since I was sent here, only he thought it wouldn't

be decent to break it off himself while I was sick. He was afraid of what people would say about him when they found it out. So he's just gradually stopped writing and coming for visits, and waited for me to realize. And if I didn't, I know he'd have broken it off himself the first day I got home. I've kept persuading myself that, in spite of the way he's acted, he did love me as much as he could love anyone, and that it would hurt him if I . . . But now I know that he never loved me, that he couldn't love anyone but himself. Oh, I don't hate him for it. He can't help being what he is. And all people seem to be—like that, mostly. I'm only going to remember that he and I grew up together, and that he was kind to me then when he thought he liked me—and forget all the rest. [*With agitated impatience.*] Oh, Stephen, you know all this I've said about him. Why don't you admit it? You've read his letters.

MURRAY [*Haltingly*]: Yes, I'll admit that was my opinion—only I wanted to be sure you'd found out for yourself.

EILEEN [*Defiantly*]: Well, I have! You see that now, don't you?

MURRAY: Yes; and I'm glad you're free of him,

for your own sake. I knew he wasn't the person. [*With an attempt at a joking tone.*] You must get one of the right sort—next time.

EILEEN [*Springing to her feet with a cry of pain*]: Stephen! [*He avoids her eyes which search his face pleadingly.*]

MURRAY [*Mumbling*]: He wasn't good enough—to lace your shoes—nor anyone else, either.

EILEEN [*With a nervous laugh*]: Don't be silly. [*After a pause during which she waits hungrily for some word from him—with a sigh of despair—faintly.*] Well, I've told you—all there is. I might as well go back.

MURRAY [*Not looking at her—indistinctly*]: Yes. You mustn't lose too much sleep. I'll come to your cottage in the morning to say good-bye. They'll permit that, I guess.

EILEEN [*Stands looking at him imploringly, her face convulsed with anguish, but he keeps his eyes fixed on the rocks at his feet. Finally she seems to give up and takes a few uncertain steps up the road toward the right—in an exhausted whisper*]: Good night, Stephen.

MURRAY [*His voice choked and husky*]: Good night, Eileen.

EILEEN [*Walks weakly up the road but, as she passes the signpost, she suddenly stops and turns to look again at MURRAY who has not moved or lifted his eyes. A great shuddering sob shatters her pent-up emotions. She runs back to MURRAY, her arms outstretched, with a choking cry*]: Stephen!

MURRAY [*Startled, whirls to face her and finds her arms thrown around his neck—in a terrified tone*]: Eileen!

EILEEN [*Brokenly*]: I love you, Stephen—you! That's what I wanted to tell! [*She gazes up into his eyes, her face transfigured by the joy and pain of this abject confession.*]

MURRAY [*Wincing as if this were the thing he had feared to hear*]: Eileen!

EILEEN [*Pulling down his head with fierce strength and kissing him passionately on the lips*]: I love you! I will say it! There! [*With sudden horror.*] Oh, I know I shouldn't kiss you! I mustn't! You're all well—and . . .

MURRAY [*Protesting frenziedly*]: Eileen! Damn it! Don't say that! What do you think I am! [*He kisses her fiercely two or three times until she forces a hand over her mouth.*]

EILEEN [*With a hysterically happy laugh*]: No!

Just hold me in your arms—just a little while—before . . .

MURRAY [*His voice trembling*]: Eileen! Don't talk that way! You're . . . it's killing me. I can't stand it!

EILEEN [*With soothing tenderness*]: Listen, dear—listen—and you won't say a word . . . I've so much to say—till I get through—please, will you promise?

MURRAY [*Between clinched teeth*]: Yes—anything, Eileen!

EILEEN: Then I want to say—I know your secret. You don't love me . . . Isn't that it? [MURRAY groans.] Sssh! It's all right, dear. You can't help what you don't feel. I've guessed you didn't—right along. And I've loved you—such a long time now—always, it seems. And you've sort of guessed—that I did—didn't you? No, don't speak! I'm sure you've guessed—only you didn't want to know—that—did you?—when you didn't love me. That's why you were lying—but I saw, I knew! Oh, I'm not blaming you, darling. How could I—never! You mustn't look so—so frightened. I know how you felt, dear. I've—I've watched you. It was just a flirtation for you at first. Wasn't it? Oh, I

know. It was just fun, and . . . Please don't look at me so. I'm not hurting you, am I? I wouldn't for worlds, dear—you know—hurt you! And then afterwards—you found we could be such good friends—helping each other—and you wanted it to stay just like that always, didn't you?—I know—and then I had to spoil it all—and fall in love with you—didn't I? Oh, it was stupid—I shouldn't—I couldn't help it, you were so kind and—and different—and I wanted to share in your work and—and everything. I knew you wouldn't want to know I loved you—when you didn't—and I tried hard to be fair and hide my love so you wouldn't see—and I did, didn't I, dear? You never knew till just lately—maybe not till just today—did you?—when I knew you were going away so soon—and couldn't help showing it. You never knew before, did you? Did you?

MURRAY [*Miserably*]: No. Oh, Eileen—Eileen, I'm so sorry!

EILEEN [*In heart-broken protest*]: Sorry? Oh, no, Stephen, you mustn't be! It's been beautiful—all of it—for me! That's what makes your going—so hard. I had to see you tonight—I'd have gone—crazy—if I didn't know you knew, if I hadn't made

you guess. And I thought—if you knew about my writing to Fred—that—maybe—it'd make some difference. [MURRAY *groans—and she laughs hysterically.*] I must have been crazy—to think that—mustn't I? As if that could—when you don't love me. Sshh! Please! Let me finish. You mustn't feel sad—or anything. It's made me happier than I've ever been—loving you—even when I did know—you didn't. Only now—you'll forgive me telling you all this, won't you, dear? Now, it's so terrible to think I won't see you any more. I'll feel so—without anybody.

MURRAY [*Brokenly*]: But I'll—come back. And you'll be out soon—and then . . .

EILEEN [*Brokenly*]: Sshh! Let me finish. You don't know how alone I am now. Father—he'll marry that housekeeper—and the children—they've forgotten me. None of them need me any more. They've found out how to get on without me—and I'm a drag—dead to them—no place for me home any more—and they'll be afraid to have me back—afraid of catching—I know she won't want me back. And Fred—he's gone—he never mattered, anyway. Forgive me, dear—worrying you—only I want you to know how much you've

meant to me—so you won't forget—ever—after you've gone.

MURRAY [*In grief-stricken tones*]: Forget? Eileen! I'll do anything in God's world . . .

EILEEN: I know—you like me a lot even if you can't love me—don't you? [*His arms tighten about her as he bends down and forces a kiss on her lips again.*] Oh, Stephen! That was for good-bye. You mustn't come tomorrow morning. I couldn't bear having you—with people watching. But you'll write after—often—won't you? [*Heart-brokenly.*] Oh, please do that, Stephen!

MURRAY. I will! I swear! And when you get out I'll—we'll—I'll find something—[*He kisses her again.*]

EILEEN [*Breaking away from him with a quick movement and stepping back a few feet*]: Good-bye darling. Remember me—and perhaps—you'll find out after a time—I'll pray God to make it so! Oh, what am I saying? Only—I'll hope—I'll hope—till I die!

MURRAY [*In anguish*]: Eileen!

EILEEN [*Her breath coming in tremulous heaves of her bosom*]: Remember, Stephen—if ever you want—I'll do anything—anything you want—no mat-

ter what—I don't care—there's just you and—
don't hate me, dear. I love you—love you—re-
member! [*She suddenly turns and runs away up the
road.*]

MURRAY: Eileen! [*He starts to run after her but
stops by the signpost and stamps on the ground
furiously, his fists clenched in impotent rage at him-
self and at fate. He curses hoarsely.*] Christ!

[*The Curtain Falls*]

ACT III

SCENE—*Four months later. An isolation room at the Infirmary with a sleeping porch at the right of it. Late afternoon of a Sunday toward the end of October. The room, extending two-thirds of the distance from left to right, is, for reasons of space economy, scantily furnished with the bare necessities—a bureau with mirror in the left corner, rear—two straight-backed chairs—a table with a glass top in the center. The floor is varnished hardwood. The walls and furniture are painted white. On the left, forward, a door to the hallway. On the right, rear, a double glass door opening on the porch. Farther front two windows. The porch, a screened-in continuation of the room, contains only a single iron bed painted white, and a small table placed beside the bed.*

The woods, the leaves of the trees rich in their autumn coloring, rise close about this side of the Infirmary. Their branches almost touch the porch on the right. In the rear of the porch they

have been cleared away from the building for a narrow space, and through this opening the distant hills can be seen with the tree tops glowing in the sunlight.

As the curtain rises, Eileen is discovered lying in the bed on the porch, propped up into a half-sitting position by pillows under her back and head. She seems to have grown much thinner. Her face is pale and drawn with deep hollows under her cheek-bones. Her eyes are dull and lusterless. She gazes straight before her into the wood with the unseeing stare of apathetic indifference. The door from the hall in the room behind her is opened and Miss Howard enters followed by Bill Carmody, Mrs. Brennan, and Mary. Carmody's manner is unwontedly sober and subdued. This air of respectable sobriety is further enhanced by a black suit, glaringly new and stiffly pressed, a new black derby hat, and shoes polished like a mirror. His expression is full of a bitter, if suppressed, resentment. His gentility is evidently forced upon him in spite of himself and correspondingly irksome. Mrs. Brennan is a tall, stout woman of fifty, lusty and loud-voiced, with a broad, snub-nosed,

florid face, a large mouth, the upper lip darkened by a suggestion of mustache, and little round blue eyes, hard and restless with a continual fuming irritation. She is got up regardless in her ridiculous Sunday-best. Mary appears tall and skinny-legged in a starched, outgrown frock. The sweetness of her face has disappeared, giving way to a hang-dog sullenness, a stubborn silence, with sulky, furtive glances of rebellion directed at her stepmother.

MISS HOWARD [*Pointing to the porch*]: She's out there on the porch.

MRS. BRENNAN [*With dignity*]: Thank you, ma'am.

MISS HOWARD [*With a searching glance at the visitors as if to appraise their intentions*]: Eileen's been very sick lately, you know, so be careful not to worry her about anything. Do your best to cheer her up.

CARMODY [*Mournfully*]: We'll try to put life in her spirits, God help her. [*With an uncertain look at Mrs. Brennan.*] Won't we, Maggie?

MRS. BRENNAN [*Turning sharply on Mary who has gone over to examine the things on the bureau*]: Come away from that, Mary. Curiosity killed a

cat. Don't be touchin' her things. Remember what I told you. Or is it admirin' your mug in the mirror you are? [*Turning to Miss Howard as Mary moves away from the bureau, hanging her head—shortly.*] Don't you worry, ma'am. We won't trouble Eileen at all.

MISS HOWARD: Another thing. You mustn't say anything to her of what Miss Gilpin just told you about her being sent away to the State Farm in a few days. Eileen isn't to know till the very last minute. It would only disturb her.

CARMODY [*Hastily*]: We'll not say a word of it.

MISS HOWARD [*Turning to the hall door*]: Thank you. [*She goes out, shutting the door.*]

MRS. BRENNAN [*Angrily*]: She has a lot of impudent gab, that one, with her don't do this and don't do that! It's a wonder you wouldn't speak up to her and shut her mouth, you great fool, and you payin' money to give her her job. [*Disgustedly.*] You've no spunk in you.

CARMODY [*Placatingly*]: Would you have me raisin' a shindy when Eileen's leavin' here in a day or more? What'd be the use?

MRS. BRENNAN: In the new place she's goin' you'll not have to pay a cent, and that's a blessing!

It's small good they've done her here for all the money they've taken. [*Gazing about the room critically.*] It's neat and clean enough; and why shouldn't it, a tiny room and the lot of them nothing to do all day but scrub. [*Scornfully.*] Two sticks of chairs and a table! They don't give much for the money.

CARMODY: Catch them! It's a good thing she's clearin' out of this and her worse off after them curin' her eight months than she was when she came. She'll maybe get well in the new place.

MRS. BRENNAN [*Indifferently*]: It's God's will, what'll happen. [*Irritably.*] And I'm thinkin' it's His punishment she's under now for having no heart in her and never writin' home a word to you or the children in two months or more. If the doctor hadn't wrote us himself to come see her, she was sick, we'd have been no wiser.

CARMODY: Whisht! Don't be blamin' a sick girl.

MARY [*Who has drifted to one of the windows at right—curiously*]: There's somebody in bed out there. I can't see her face. Is it Eileen?

MRS. BRENNAN: Don't be goin' out there till I tell you, you imp! I must speak to your father

first. [*Coming closer to him and lowering her voice.*]
Are you going to tell her about it?

CARMODY [*Pretending ignorance*]: About what?

MRS. BRENNAN: About what, indeed! Don't pretend you don't know. About our marryin' two weeks back, of course. What else?

CARMODY [*Uncertainly*]: Yes—I disremembered she didn't know. I'll have to tell her, surely.

MRS. BRENNAN [*Flaring up*]: You speak like you wouldn't. Is it shamed of me you are? Are you afraid of a slip of a girl? Well, then, I'm not! I'll tell her to her face soon enough.

CARMODY [*Angry in his turn—assertively*]: You'll not, now! Keep your mouth out of this and your rough tongue! I tell you I'll tell her.

MRS. BRENNAN [*Satisfied*]: Let's be going out to her, then. [*They move toward the door to the porch.*] And keep your eye on your watch. We mustn't miss the train. Come with us, Mary, and remember to keep your mouth shut. [*They go out on the porch and stand just outside the door waiting for EILEEN to notice them; but the girl in bed continues to stare into the woods, oblivious to their presence.*]

MRS. BRENNAN [*Nudging CARMODY with her elbow—in a harsh whisper*]: She don't see us. It's a

dream she's in with her eyes open. Glory be, it's bad she's lookin'. The look on her face'd frighten you. Speak to her, you! [EILEEN *stirs uneasily as if this whisper had disturbed her unconsciously.*]

CARMODY [*Wetting his lips and clearing his throat huskily*]: Eileen.

EILEEN [*Startled, turns and stares at them with frightened eyes. After a pause she ventures uncertainly as if she were not sure but what these figures might be creatures of her dream*]: Father. [*Her eyes shift to MRS. BRENNAN'S face and she shudders.*] Mrs. Brennan.

MRS. BRENNAN [*Quickly—in a voice meant to be kindly*]: Here we are, all of us, come to see you. How is it you're feelin' now, Eileen? [*While she is talking she advances to the bedside, followed by CARMODY, and takes one of the sick girl's hands in hers. EILEEN withdraws it as if stung and holds it out to her father. MRS. BRENNAN'S face flushes angrily and she draws back from the bedside.*]

CARMODY [*Moved—with rough tenderness patting her hand*]: Ah, Eileen, sure it's a sight for sore eyes to see you again! [*He bends down as if to kiss her, but, struck by a sudden fear, hesitates, straightens himself, and shamed by the understanding in*

EILEEN'S eyes, grows red and stammers confusedly.] How are you now? Sure it's the picture of health you're lookin'. [EILEEN sighs and turns her eyes away from him with a resigned sadness.]

MRS. BRENNAN: What are you standin' there for like a stick, Mary? Haven't you a word to say to your sister?

EILEEN [*Twisting her head around and seeing MARY for the first time—with a glad cry*]: Mary! I—why, I didn't see you before! Come here. [MARY approaches gingerly with apprehensive side glances at MRS. BRENNAN who watches her grimly. EILEEN'S arms reach out for her hungrily. She grasps her about the waist and seems trying to press the unwilling child to her breast.]

MARY [*Fidgeting nervously—suddenly in a frightened whine*]: Let me go! [EILEEN releases her, looks at her face dazedly for a second, then falls back limply with a little moan and shuts her eyes. MARY, who has stepped back a pace, remains fixed there as if fascinated with fright by her sister's face. She stammers.] Eileen—you look so—so funny.

EILEEN [*Without opening her eyes—in a dead voice*]: You, too! I never thought you— Go away, please.

MRS. BRENNAN [*With satisfaction*]: Come here to me, Mary, and don't be botherin' your sister. [MARY avoids her stepmother but retreats to the far end of the porch where she stands shrunk back against the wall, her eyes fixed on EILEEN with the same fascinated horror.]

CARMODY [*After an uncomfortable pause, forcing himself to speak*]: Is the pain bad, Eileen?

EILEEN [*Dully—without opening her eyes*]: There's no pain. [*There is another pause—then she murmurs indifferently.*] There are chairs in the room you can bring out if you want to sit down.

MRS. BRENNAN [*Sharply*]: We've not time to be sittin'. We've the train back to catch.

EILEEN [*In the same lifeless voice*]: It's a disagreeable trip. I'm sorry you had to come.

CARMODY [*Fighting against an oppression he cannot understand, bursts into a flood of words*]: Don't be talking of the trip. Sure we're glad to take it to get a sight of you. It's three months since I've had a look at you and I was anxious. Why haven't you written a line to us? You could do that without trouble, surely. Don't you ever think of us at all any more? [*He waits for an answer but EILEEN remains silent with her eyes closed.* CARMODY starts to

walk up and down talking with an air of desperation.] You're not asking a bit of news from home. I'm thinkin' the people out here have taken all the thought of us out of your head. We're all well, thank God. I've another good job on the streets from Murphy and one that'll last a long time, praise be! I'm needin' it surely, with all the expenses—but no matter. Billy had a raise from his old skinflint of a boss a month back. He's gettin' seven a week now and proud as a turkey. He was comin' out with us today but he'd a date with his girl. Sure, he's got a girl now, the young bucko! What d'you think of him? It's old Malloy's girl he's after—the pop-eyed one with glasses, you remember—as ugly as a blind sheep, only he don't think so. He said to give you his love. [EILEEN *stirs and sighs wearily, a frown appearing for an instant on her forehead.*] And Tom and Nora was comin' out too, but Father Fitz had some doin's or other up to the school, and he told them to be there, so they wouldn't come with us, but they sent their love to you too. They're growin' so big you'd not know them. Tom's no good at the school. He's like Billy was. I've had to take the strap to him often. He's always playin' hooky and roamin'

the streets. And Nora—[*With pride.*] There's the divil for you! Up to everything she is and no hold-in' her high spirits. As pretty as a picture, and the smartest girl in her school, Father Fitz says. Am I lyin', Maggie?

MRS. BRENNAN [*Grudgingly*]: She's smart enough—and too free with her smartness.

CARMODY [*Pleased*]: Ah, don't be talkin'! She'll know more than the lot of us before she's grown even. [*He pauses in his walk and stares down at EILEEN, frowning.*] Are you sick, Eileen, that you're keepin' you eyes shut without a word out of you?

EILEEN [*Wearily*]: No. I'm tired, that's all.

CARMODY [*Resuming his walk*]: And who else is there, let me think? Oh, Mary—she's the same as ever, you can see for yourself.

EILEEN [*Bitterly*]: The same? Oh, no!

CARMODY: She's grown, you mean? I suppose. You'd notice, not seeing her so long? [*He can think of nothing else to say but walks up and down with a restless, uneasy expression.*]

MRS. BRENNAN [*Sharply*]: What time is it gettin'?

CARMODY [*Fumbles for his watch*]: Half past four, a bit after.

MRS. BRENNAN: We'll have to leave soon. It's a long jaunt down that hill in that buggy. [*She catches his eye and makes violent signs to him to tell EILEEN what he has come to tell.*]

CARMODY [*After an uncertain pause—clenching his fists and clearing his throat*]: Eileen.

EILEEN: Yes.

CARMODY [*Irritably*]: Can't you open your eyes on me? It's like talkin' to myself I am?

EILEEN [*Looking at him—dully*]: What is it?

CARMODY [*Stammering—avoiding her glance*]: It's this, Eileen—me and Maggie—Mrs. Brennan, that is—we . . .

EILEEN [*Without surprise*]: You're going to marry her?

CARMODY [*With an effort*]: Not goin' to. It's done.

EILEEN [*Without a trace of feeling*]: Oh, so you've been married already? [*Without further comment, she closes her eyes.*]

CARMODY: Two weeks back we were, by Father Fitz. [*He stands staring down at his daughter, irri-*

tated, perplexed and confounded by her silence, looking as if he longed to shake her.]

MRS. BRENNAN [*Angry at the lack of enthusiasm shown by EILEEN*]: Let us get out of this, Bill. We're not wanted, that's plain as the nose on your face. It's little she's caring about you, and little thanks she has for all you've done for her and the money you've spent.

CARMODY [*With a note of pleading*]: Is that a proper way to be treatin' your father, Eileen, after what I've told you? Have you no heart in you at all? Is it nothin' to you you've a good, kind woman now for mother?

EILEEN [*Fiercely, her eyes flashing open on him*]: No, No! Never!

MRS. BRENNAN [*Plucking at CARMODY's elbow. He stands looking at EILEEN helplessly, his mouth open, a guilty flush spreading over his face*]: Come out of here, you big fool, you! Is it to listen to insults to your livin' wife you're waiting? Am I to be tormented and you never raise a hand to stop her?

CARMODY [*Turning on her threateningly*]: Will you shut your bag?

EILEEN [*With a moan*]: Oh, go away, Father! Please! Take her away!

MRS. BRENNAN [*Pulling at his arm*]: Take me away this second or I'll go on without you and never speak again to you till the day I die!

CARMODY [*Pushes her violently away from him—raging, his fist uplifted*]: Shut your gab, I'm saying!

MRS. BRENNAN: The divil mend you and yours then! I'm leavin' you. [*She starts for the door.*]

CARMODY [*Hastily*]: Wait a bit, Maggie. I'm comin'. [*She goes into the room, slamming the door, but once inside she stands still, trying to listen.* CARMODY glares down at his daughter's pale twitching face with the closed eyes. Finally he croaks in a whining tone of fear.] Is your last word a cruel one to me this day, Eileen? [*She remains silent. His face darkens. He turns and strides out of the door. MARY darts after him with a frightened cry of "Papa."* EILEEN covers her face with her hands and a shudder of relief runs over her body.]

MRS. BRENNAN [*As CARMODY enters the room—in a mollified tone*]: So you've come, have you? Let's go, then? [*CARMODY stands looking at her in silence, his expression full of gloomy rage. She bursts out impatiently.*] Are you comin' or are you goin' back to her? [*She grabs MARY'S arm and*

pushes her toward the door to the hall.] Are you comin' or not, I'm asking?

CARMODY [*Somberly—as if to himself*]: There's something wrong in the whole of this—that I can't make out. [*With sudden fury he brandishes his fists as though defying someone and growls threateningly.*] And I'll get drunk this night—dead, rotten drunk! [*He seems to detect disapproval in MRS. BRENNAN'S face for he shakes his fist at her and repeats like a solemn oath.*] I'll get drunk this night, I'm sayin'! I'll get drunk if my soul roasts for it—and no one in the whole world is strong enough to stop me! [*MRS. BRENNAN turns from him with a disgusted shrug of her shoulders and hustles MARY out of the door. CARMODY, after a second's pause, follows them. EILEEN lies still, looking out into the woods with empty, desolate eyes. MISS HOWARD comes into the room from the hall and goes to the porch, carrying a glass of milk in her hand.*]

MISS HOWARD: Here's your diet, Eileen. I forgot it until just now. Sundays are awful days, aren't they? They get me all mixed up in my work, with all these visitors around. Did you have a nice visit with your folks?

EILEEN [*Forcing a smile*]: Yes.

MISS HOWARD: You look worn out. I hope they didn't worry you over home affairs?

EILEEN: No. [*She sips her milk and sets it back on the table with a shudder of disgust*].

MISS HOWARD [*With a smile*]: What a face! You'd think you were taking poison.

EILEEN: I hate it! [*With deep passion*.] I wish it was poison!

MISS HOWARD [*Jokingly*]: Oh, come now! That isn't a nice way to feel on the Sabbath. [*With a meaning smile*.] I've some news that'll cheer you up, I bet. [*Archly*.] Guess who's here on a visit?

EILEEN [*Startled—in a frightened whisper*]: Who?

MISS HOWARD: Mr. Murray. [*EILEEN closes her eyes wincingly for a moment and a shadow of pain comes over her face*.] He just came about the time your folks did. I saw him for a moment, not to speak to. He was going to the main building—to see Doctor Stanton, I suppose. [*Beaming—with a certain curiosity*.] What do you think of that for news?

EILEEN [*Trying to conceal her agitation and assume a casual tone*]: He must have come to be examined.

MISS HOWARD [*With a meaning laugh*]: Oh, I'd hardly say that was his main reason. He does look much thinner and very tired, though. I suppose he's been working too hard. [*In business-like tones.*] Well, I've got to get back on the job. [*She turns to the door calling back jokingly.*] He'll be in to see you of course, so look your prettiest. [*She goes out and shuts the door to the porch. EILEEN gives a frightened gasp and struggles up in bed as if she wanted to call the nurse to return. Then she lies back in a state of great nervous excitement, twisting her head with eager, fearful glances toward the door, listening, clasping and unclasping her thin fingers on the white spread. As MISS HOWARD walks across the room to the hall door, it is opened and STEPHEN MURRAY enters. A great change is visible in his face. It is much thinner and the former healthy tan has faded to a sallow pallor. Puffy shadows of sleeplessness and dissipation are marked under his heavy-lidded eyes. He is dressed in a well-fitting, expensive, dark suit, a white shirt with a soft collar and bright-colored tie.*]

MISS HOWARD [*With pleased surprise, holding out her hand*]: Hello, Mr. Murray.

MURRAY [*Shaking her hand—with a forced pleasantness*]: How are you, Miss Howard?

MISS HOWARD: Fine as ever. It certainly looks natural to see you around here again—not that I hope you're here to stay, though. [*With a smile.*] I suppose you're on your way to Eileen now. Well, I won't keep you. I've oodles of work to do. [*She opens the hall door. He starts for the porch.*] Oh, I was forgetting—Congratulations! I've read those stories—all of us have. They're great. We're all so proud of you. You're one of our graduates, you know.

MURRAY [*Indifferently*]: Oh,—that stuff.

MISS HOWARD [*Gaily*]: Don't be so modest. Well, see you later, I hope.

MURRAY: Yes. Doctor Stanton invited me to stay for supper and I may . . .

MISS HOWARD: Fine! Be sure to! [*She goes out.*]
MURRAY *walks to porch door and steps out. He finds EILEEN'S eyes waiting for him. As their eyes meet she gasps involuntarily and he stops short in his tracks. For a moment they remain looking at each other in silence.*]

EILEEN [*Dropping her eyes—faintly*]: Stephen.

MURRAY [*Much moved, strides to her bedside and takes her hands awkwardly*]: Eileen. [*Then after a second's pause in which he searches her face and is*

shocked by the change illness has made—anxiously.]
How are you feeling, Eileen? [*He grows confused by her gaze and his eyes shift from hers, which search his face with wild yearning.*]

EILEEN [*Forcing a smile*]: Oh, I'm all right. [*Eagerly.*] But you, Stephen? How are you? [*Excitedly.*] Oh, it's good to see you again! [*Her eyes continue fixed on his face pleadingly, questioningly.*]

MURRAY [*Haltingly*]: And it's sure great to see you again, Eileen. [*He releases her hand and turns away.*] And I'm fine and dandy. I look a little done up, I guess, but that's only the result of too much New York.

EILEEN [*Sensing from his manner that whatever she has hoped for from his visit is not to be, sinks back on the pillows, shutting her eyes hopelessly, and cannot control a sigh of pain.*]

MURRAY [*Turning to her anxiously*]: What's the matter, Eileen? You're not in pain, are you?

EILEEN [*Wearily*]: No.

MURRAY: You haven't been feeling badly lately, have you? Your letters suddenly stopped—not a line for the past three weeks—and I . . .

EILEEN [*Bitterly*]: I got tired of writing and never getting any answer, Stephen.

MURRAY [*Shame-faced*]: Come, Eileen, it wasn't as bad as that. You'd think I never—and I did write, didn't I?

EILEEN: Right after you left here, you did, Stephen. Lately . . .

MURRAY: I'm sorry, Eileen. It wasn't that I didn't mean to—but—in New York it's so hard. You start to do one thing and something else interrupts you. You never seem to get any one thing done when it ought to be. You can understand that, can't you, Eileen?

EILEEN [*Sadly*]: Yes. I understand everything now.

MURRAY [*Offended*]: What do you mean by everything? You said that so strangely. You mean you don't believe . . . [*But she remains silent with her eyes shut. He frowns and takes to pacing up and down beside the bed.*] Why have they got you stuck out here on this isolation porch, Eileen?

EILEEN [*Dully*]: There was no room on the main porch, I suppose.

MURRAY: You never mentioned in any of your letters . . .

EILEEN: It's not very cheerful to get letters full of sickness. I wouldn't like to, I know.

MURRAY [*Hurt*]: That isn't fair, Eileen. You know I . . . How long have you been back in the Infirmary?

EILEEN: About a month.

MURRAY [*Shocked*]: A month! But you were up and about—on exercise, weren't you—before that?

EILEEN: No. I had to stay in bed while I was at the cottage.

MURRAY: You mean—ever since that time they sent you back—the day before I left?

EILEEN: Yes.

MURRAY: But I thought from the cheery tone of your letters that you were . . .

EILEEN [*Uneasily*]: Getting better? I am, Stephen. I'm strong enough to be up now but Doctor Stanton wants me to take a good long rest this time so that when I do get up again I'll be sure . . . [*She breaks off impatiently.*] But don't let's talk about it. I'm all right. [MURRAY *glances down at her face worriedly. She changes the subject.*] You've been over to see Doctor Stanton, haven't you?

MURRAY: Yes.

EILEEN: Did he examine you?

MURRAY: Yes. [*Carelessly.*] Oh, he found me O.K. I'm fine and dandy, as I said before.

EILEEN: I'm glad, Stephen. [*After a pause.*] Tell about yourself—what you've been doing. You've written a lot lately, haven't you?

MURRAY [*Frowning*]: No. I haven't been able to get down to it—somehow. There's so little time to yourself once you get to know people in New York. The sale of the stories you typed put me on easy street as far as money goes, so I've felt no need . . . [*He laughs weakly.*] I guess I'm one of those who have to get down to hard pan before they get the kick to drive them to hard work.

EILEEN [*Surprised*]: Was it hard work writing them up here? You used to seem so happy just in doing them.

MURRAY: I was—happier than I've been before or afterward. [*Cynically.*] But—I don't know—it was a new game to me then and I was chuck full of illusions about the glory of it. [*He laughs half-heartedly.*] Now I'm hardly a bit more enthusiastic over it than I used to be over newspaper work. It's like everything else, I guess. When you've got it, you find you don't want it.

EILEEN [*Looking at him wonderingly—disturbed.*] But isn't just the writing itself worth while?

MURRAY [*As if suddenly ashamed of himself—*

quickly): Yes. Of course it is. I'm talking like a fool. I'm sore at everything because I'm dissatisfied with my own cussedness and laziness—and I want to pass the buck. [*With a smile of cheerful confidence.*] It's only a fit. I'll come out of it all right and get down to brass tacks again.

EILEEN [*With an encouraging smile*]: That's the way you ought to feel. It'd be wrong—I've read the two stories that have come out so far over and over. They're fine, I think. Every line in them sounds like you, and at the same time sounds natural and like people and things you see every day. Everybody thinks they're fine, Stephen.

MURRAY [*Pleased but pretending cynicism*]: Then they must be rotten. [*Then with self-assurance.*] Well, I've plenty more of those stories in my head. Every time I think of my home town there seems to be a new story in someone I've known there. [*Spiritedly.*] Oh, I'll pound them out sometime when the spirit moves; and I'll make them so much better than what I've done so far, you won't recognize them. I feel it's in me to do it. [*Smiling.*] Darn it, do you know just talking about it makes me feel as if I could sit right down now and start in on one. Is it the fact I've worked here before—or

is it seeing you, Eileen? [*Gratefully.*] I really believe it's you. I haven't forgotten how you helped me before.

EILEEN [*In a tone of pain*]: Don't, Stephen. I didn't do anything.

MURRAY [*Eagerly*]: Yes, you did. You made it possible. I can't tell you what a help you were. And since I've left the San, I've looked forward to your letters to boost up my spirits. When I felt down in the mouth over my own idiocy, I used to re-read them, and they always were good medicine. I can't tell you how grateful I've felt, honestly!

EILEEN [*Faintly*]: You're kind to say so, Stephen—but it was nothing, really.

MURRAY: And I can't tell you how I've missed those letters for the past three weeks. They left a big hole in things. I was worried about you—not having heard a word. [*With a smile.*] So I came to look you up.

EILEEN [*Faintly. Forcing an answering smile*]: Well, you see now I'm all right.

MURRAY [*Concealing his doubt*]: Yes, of course you are. Only I'd a darn sight rather see you up and about. We could take a walk, then—through

the woods. [*A wince of pain shadows EILEEN's face. She closes her eyes. MURRAY continues softly, after a pause.*] You haven't forgotten that last night—out there—Eileen?

EILEEN [*Her lips trembling—trying to force a laugh*]: Please don't remind me of that, Stephen. I was so silly and so sick, too. My temp was so high it must have made me—completely crazy—or I'd never dreamed of doing such a stupid thing. My head must have been full of wheels because I don't remember anything I did or said, hardly.

MURRAY [*His pride taken down a peg by this—in a hurt tone*]: Oh! Well—I haven't forgotten and I never will, Eileen. [*Then his face clears up as if a weight had been taken off his conscience.*] Well—I rather thought you wouldn't take it seriously—afterward. You were all up in the air that night. And you never mentioned it in your letters . . .

EILEEN [*Pleadingly*]: Don't talk about it! Forget it ever happened. It makes me feel—[*with a half-hysterical laugh*]—like a fool!

MURRAY [*Worried*]: All right, Eileen. I won't. Don't get worked up over nothing. That isn't resting, you know. [*Looking down at her closed eyes—solicitously.*] Perhaps all my talking has tired you

out? Do you feel done up? Why don't you try and take a nap now?

EILEEN [*Dully*]: Yes, I'd like to sleep.

MURRAY [*Clasps her hands gently*]: I'll leave you then. I'll drop back to say good-bye and stay awhile before I go. I won't leave until the last train. [*As she doesn't answer.*] Do you hear, Eileen?

EILEEN [*Weakly*]: Yes. You'll come back—to say good-bye.

MURRAY: Yes. I'll be back sure. [*He presses her hand and after a kindly glance of sympathy down at her face, tiptoes to the door and goes into the room, shutting the door behind him. When she hears the door shut EILEEN struggles up in bed and stretches her arms after him with an agonized sob "Stephen!" She hides her face in her hands and sobs brokenly. MURRAY walks across to the hall door and is about to go when the door is opened and MISS GILPIN enters.*]

MISS GILPIN [*Hurriedly*]: How do you do, Mr. Murray. Doctor Stanton just told me you were here.

MURRAY [*As they shake hands—smiling*]: How are you, Miss Gilpin?

MISS GILPIN: He said he'd examined you, and that you were O.K. I'm glad. [*Glancing at him keenly.*] You've been talking to Eileen?

MURRAY: Just left her this second. She wanted to sleep for a while.

MISS GILPIN [*Wonderingly*]: Sleep? [*Then hurriedly.*] It's too bad. I wish I'd known you were here sooner. I wanted very much to talk to you before you saw Eileen. You see, I knew you'd pay us a visit sometime. [*With a worried smile.*] I still think I ought to have a talk with you.

MURRAY: Certainly, Miss Gilpin.

MISS GILPIN [*Takes a chair and places it near the hall door*]: Sit down. She can't hear us here. Goodness knows this is hardly the place for confidences, but there are visitors all over and it'll have to do. Did you close the door tightly? She mustn't hear me above all. [*She goes to the porch door and peeks out for a moment; then comes back to him with flashing eyes.*] She's crying! What have you been saying to her? Oh, it's too late, I know! The fools shouldn't have permitted you to see her before I . . . What has happened out there? Tell me! I must know.

MURRAY [*Stammering*]: Happened? Nothing. She's crying? Why, Miss Gilpin—you know I wouldn't hurt her for worlds.

MISS GILPIN [*More calmly*]: Intentionally, I know you wouldn't. But something has happened. [*Then briskly.*] We're talking at cross purposes. Since you don't seem inclined to confide in me, I'll have to in you. You noticed how badly she looks, didn't you?

MURRAY: Yes, I did.

MISS GILPIN [*Gravely*]: She's been going down hill steadily—[*meaningly*]—ever since you left. She's in a very serious state, let me impress you with that. We've all loved her, and felt so sorry for her and admired her spirit so—that's the only reason she's been allowed to stay here so long after her time. We've kept hoping she'd start to pick up—in another day—in another week. But now that's all over. Doctor Stanton has given up hope of her improving here, and her father is unwilling to pay for her elsewhere now he knows there's a cheaper place—the State Farm. So she's to be sent there in a day or so.

MURRAY [*Springing to his feet—horrified*]: To the State Farm!

MISS GILPIN: Her time here is long past. You know the rule—and she isn't getting better.

MURRAY [*Appalled*]: That means . . . !

MISS GILPIN [*Forcibly*]: Death! That's what it means for her!

MURRAY [*Stunned*]: Good God, I never dreamed . . .

MISS GILPIN: With others it might be different. They might improve under changed surroundings. In her case, it's certain. She'll die. And it wouldn't do any good to keep her here, either. She'd die here. She'll die anywhere. She'll die because lately she's given up hope, she hasn't wanted to live any more. She's let herself go—and now it's too late.

MURRAY: Too late? You mean there's no chance—now? [MISS GILPIN *nods*. MURRAY *is overwhelmed—after a pause—stammering*.] Isn't there—anything—we can do?

MISS GILPIN [*Sadly*]: I don't know. I should have talked to you before you— You see, she's seen you now. She knows. [*As he looks mystified she continues slowly*.] I suppose you know that Eileen loves you, don't you?

MURRAY [*As if defending himself against an accusation—with confused alarm*]: No—Miss Gilpin.

You're wrong, honestly. She may have felt something like that—once—but that was long ago before I left the San. She's forgotten all about it since, I know she has. [MISS GILPIN *smiles bitterly.*] Why, she never even alluded to it in any of her letters—all these months.

MISS GILPIN: Did you in yours?

MURRAY: No, of course not. You don't understand. Why—just now—she said that part of it had all been so silly she felt she'd acted like a fool and didn't ever want to be reminded of it.

MISS GILPIN: She saw that you didn't love her—any more than you did in the days before you left. Oh, I used to watch you then. I sensed what was going on between you. I would have stopped it then out of pity for her, if I could have, if I didn't know that any interference would only make matters worse. And then I thought that it might be only a surface affair—that after you were gone it would end for her. [*She sighs—then after a pause.*] You'll have to forgive me for speaking to you so boldly on a delicate subject. But, don't you see, it's for her sake. I love Eileen. We all do. [*Averting her eyes from his—in a low voice.*] I know how Eileen feels, Mr. Murray. Once—a long time ago—I

suffered as she is suffering—from this same mistake. But I had resources to fall back upon that Eileen hasn't got—a family who loved me and understood—friends—so I pulled through. But it spoiled my life for a long time. [*Looking at him again and forcing a smile.*] So I feel that perhaps I have a right to speak for Eileen who has no one else.

MURRAY [*Huskily—much moved*]: Say anything to me you like, Miss Gilpin.

MISS GILPIN [*After a pause—sadly*]: You don't love her—do you?

MURRAY: No—I . . . I don't believe I've ever thought much of loving anyone—that way.

MISS GILPIN [*Sadly*]: Oh, it's too late, I'm afraid. If we had only had this talk before you had seen her! I meant to talk to you frankly and if I found out you didn't love Eileen—there was always the forlorn hope that you might—I was going to tell you not to see her, for her sake—not to let her face the truth. For I am sure she continued to hope in spite of everything, and always would—to the end—if she didn't see you. I was going to implore you to stay away, to write her letters that would encourage her hope, and in that way she

would never learn the truth. I thought of writing you all this—but—it's so delicate a matter—I didn't have the courage. [*With intense grief.*] And now Doctor Stanton's decision to send her away makes everything doubly hard. When she knows *that*—she will throw everything that holds her to life—out of the window! And think of it—her dying there alone!

MURRAY [*Very pale*]: Don't! That shan't happen. I can at least save her from that. I have money enough—I'll make more—to send her any place you think . . .

MISS GILPIN: That is something—but it doesn't touch the source of her unhappiness. If there were only some way to make her happy in the little time that is left to her! She has suffered so much through you. Oh, Mr. Murray, can't you tell her you love her?

MURRAY [*After a pause—slowly*]: But she'll never believe me, I'm afraid, now.

MISS GILPIN [*Eagerly*]: But you must make her believe! And you must ask her to marry you. If you're engaged it will give you the right in her eyes to take her away. You can take her to some private San. There's a small place but a very good one at

White Lake. It's not too expensive, and it's a beautiful spot, out of the world, and you can live and work nearby. And she'll be happy to the very last. Don't you think that's something—the best you have—the best you can give in return for her love for you?

MURRAY [*Slowly—deeply moved*]: Yes. [*Then determinedly.*] But I won't go into this thing by halves. It isn't fair to her. I'm going to marry her—yes, I mean it. I owe her that if it will make her happy. But to ask her without really meaning it—knowing she—no, I can't do that.

MISS GILPIN [*With a sad smile*]: I'm glad you feel that way. It shouldn't be hard now for you to convince her. But I know Eileen. She will never consent—for your sake—until she is well again. And stop and think, Mr. Murray. Even if she did consent to marry you right now the shock—the excitement—would be suicide for her. I would have to warn her against it myself; and you wouldn't propose it if you knew the danger to her in her present condition. She hasn't long to live, at best. I've talked with Dr. Stanton. I know. God knows I would be the first one to hold out hope if there was any. There isn't. It's merely a case of prolong-

ing the short time left to her and making it happy. You must bear that in mind—as a fact!

MURRAY [*Dully*]: All right. I'll remember. But it's hell to realize . . . [*He turns suddenly toward the porch door.*] I'll go out to her now while I feel—that—yes, I know I can make her believe me now.

MISS GILPIN: You'll tell me—later on?

MURRAY: Yes. (*He opens the door to the porch and goes out. MISS GILPIN stands for a moment looking after him worriedly. Then she sighs helplessly and goes out to the hall. MURRAY steps noiselessly out on the porch. EILEEN is lying motionless with her eyes closed. MURRAY stands looking at her, his face showing the emotional stress he is under, a great pitying tenderness in his eyes. Then he seems to come to a revealing decision on what is best to do for he tiptoes to the bedside and bending down with a quick movement, takes her in his arm and kisses her*): Eileen!

EILEEN [*Startled at first, resists automatically for a moment*]: Stephen! [*Then she succumbs and lies back in his arms with a happy sigh, putting both hands to the sides of his face and staring up at him adoringly.*] Stephen, dear!

MURRAY [*Quickly questioning her before she can*

question him]: You were fibbing—about that night—weren't you? You do love me, don't you, Eileen?

EILEEN [*Breathlessly*]: Yes—I—but you, Stephen—you don't love me. [*She makes a movement as if to escape from his embrace.*]

MURRAY [*Genuinely moved—with tender reassurance*]: Why do you suppose I came way up here if not to tell you I did? But they warned me—Miss Gilpin—that you were still weak and that I mustn't excite you in any way. And I—I didn't want—but I had to come back and tell you in spite of them.

EILEEN [*Convinced—with a happy laugh*]: And is that why you acted so strange—and cold? Aren't they silly to tell you that! As if being happy could hurt me! Why, it's just that, just you I've needed!

MURRAY [*His voice trembling*]: And you'll marry me, Eileen?

EILEEN [*A shadow of doubt crossing her face momentarily*]: Are you sure—you want me, Stephen?

MURRAY [*A lump in his throat—huskily*]: Yes. I do want you, Eileen.

EILEEN [*Happily*]: Then I will—after I'm well again, of course. [*She kisses him.*]

MURRAY [*Chokingly*]: That won't be long now, Eileen.

EILEEN [*Joyously*]: No—not long—now that I'm happy for once in my life. I'll surprise you, Stephen, the way I'll pick up and grow fat and healthy. You won't know me in a month. How can you ever love such a skinny homely thing as I am now! [*With a laugh.*] I couldn't if I was a man—love such a fright.

MURRAY: Ssshh!

EILEEN [*Confidently*]: But you'll see now. I'll make myself get well. We won't have to wait long, dear. And can't you move up to the town near here where you can see me every day, and you can work and I can help you with your stories just as I used to—and I'll soon be strong enough to do your typing again. [*She laughs.*] Listen to me—talking about helping you—as if they weren't all your own work, those blessed stories!—as if I had anything to do with it!

MURRAY [*Hoarsely*]: You had! You did! They're yours. [*Trying to calm himself.*] But you mustn't stay here, Eileen. You'll let me take you away, won't you?—to a better place—not far away—White Lake, it's called. There's a small private

sanatorium there. Doctor Stanton says it's one of the best. And I'll live nearby—it's a beautiful spot—and see you every day.

EILEEN [*In the seventh heaven*]: And did you plan out all this for me beforehand, Stephen? [*He nods with averted eyes. She kisses his hair.*] You wonderful, kind dear! And it's a small place—this White Lake? Then we won't have so many people around to disturb us, will we? We'll be all to ourselves. And you ought to work so well up there. I know New York wasn't good for you—alone—without me. And I'll get well and strong so quick! And you say it's a beautiful place? [*Intensely.*] Oh, Stephen, any place in the world would be beautiful to me—if you were with me! [*His face is hidden in the pillow beside her. She is suddenly startled by a muffled sob—anxiously.*] Why—Stephen—you're—you're crying! [*The tears start to her own eyes.*]

MURRAY [*Raising his face which is this time alight with a passionate awakening—a revelation.*] Oh, I do love you, Eileen! I do! I love you, love you!

EILEEN [*Thrilled by the depth of his present sincerity—but with a teasing laugh*]: Why, you say that as if you'd just made the discovery, Stephen!

MURRAY: Oh, what does it matter, Eileen! I love you! Oh, what a blind selfish ass I've been! I love you! You are my life—everything! I love you, Eileen! I do! I do! And we'll be married— [*Suddenly his face grows frozen with horror as he remembers the doom. For the first time the gray specter of Death confronts him face to face as a menacing reality.*]

EILEEN [*Terrified by the look in his eyes*]: What is it, Stephen? What . . . ?

MURRAY [*With a groan—protesting half-aloud in a strangled voice*]: No! No! It can't be . . . ! My God! [*He clutches her hands and hides his face in them.*]

EILEEN [*With a cry*]: Stephen! What is the matter? [*Her face suddenly betrays an awareness, an intuitive sense of the truth.*] Oh—Stephen . . . Stephen, I'm going to die! I'm going to die!

MURRAY [*Lifting his tortured face—wildly*]: No!

EILEEN [*Her voice sinking to a dead whisper*]: I'm going to die.

MURRAY [*Seizing her in his arms in a passionate frenzy and pressing his lips to hers*]: No, Eileen, no, my love, no! What are you saying? What could have made you think it? You—die? Why, of course, we're all going to die—but—Good God!

What damned nonsense! You're getting well—every day. Everyone—Miss Gilpin—Stanton—everyone told me that. I swear before God, Eileen, they did! You're still weak, that's all. They said—it won't be long. You mustn't think that—not now.

EILEEN [*Miserably—unconvinced*]: But why did you look at me—that way—with that awful look in your eyes . . . ? [*While she is speaking MISS GILPIN enters the room from the hallway. She appears worried, agitated. She hurries toward the porch but stops inside the doorway, arrested by MURRAY'S voice.*]

MURRAY [*Takes EILEEN by the shoulders and forces her to look into his eyes*]: I wasn't thinking about you then . . . No, Eileen—not you. I didn't mean you—but me—yes, me! I couldn't tell you before. They'd warned me—not to excite you—and I knew that would—if you loved me.

EILEEN [*Staring at him with frightened amazement*]: You mean you . . . you're sick again?

MURRAY [*Desperately striving to convince her*]: Yes. I saw Stanton. I lied to you before—about that. It's come back on me, Eileen—you see how I look—I've let myself go. I don't know how to

live without you, don't you see? And you'll—marry me now—without waiting—and help me to get well—you and I together—and not mind their lies—what they say to prevent you? You'll do that, Eileen?

EILEEN: I'll do anything for you . . . And I'd be so happy . . . [*She breaks down.*] But, Stephen, I'm so afraid. I'm all mixed up. Oh. Stephen, I don't know what to believe!

MISS GILPIN [*Who has been listening thunder-struck to MURRAY'S wild pleading, at last summons up the determination to interfere—steps out on the porch—in a tone of severe remonstrance.*] Mr. Murray!

MURRAY [*Starts to his feet with wild, bewildered eyes—confusedly*]: Oh—you . . . [*MISS GILPIN cannot restrain an exclamation of dismay as she sees his face wrung by despair. EILEEN turns her head away with a little cry as if she would hide her face in the bedclothes. A sudden fierce resolution lights up MURRAY'S countenance—hoarsely.*] You're just in the nick of time, Miss Gilpin! Eileen! Listen! You'll believe Miss Gilpin, won't you? She knows all about it. [*EILEEN turns her eyes questioningly on the bewildered nurse.*]

MISS GILPIN: What . . . ?

MURRAY [*Determinedly*]: Miss Gilpin, Doctor Stanton has spoken to you since he examined me. He must have told you the truth about me. Eileen doesn't believe me—when I tell her I've got T. B. again. She thinks—I don't know what. I know you're not supposed to, but can't you make an exception—in this case? Can't you tell Eileen the truth?

MISS GILPIN [*Stunned by being thus defiantly confronted—stammeringly*]: Mr. Murray! I—I—how can you ask . . .

MURRAY [*Quickly*]: Eileen has a right to know. She loves me—and I—I—love her! [*He holds her eyes and speaks with a passion of sincerity that compels belief.*] I love her, do you hear?

MISS GILPIN [*Falteringly*]: You—love—Eileen?

MURRAY: Yes! I do! [*Entreatingly.*] So—tell her—won't you?

MISS GILPIN [*Swallowing hard, her eyes full of pity and sorrow fixed on EILEEN*]: Yes—Eileen—it's true. [*She turns away slowly toward the door.*]

EILEEN [*With a little cry of alarmed concern, stretches out her hands to MURRAY protectingly*]:

Poor Stephen—dear! [*He grasps her hands and kisses them.*]

MISS GILPIN [*In a low voice*]: Mr. Murray. May I speak to you for a moment?

MURRAY [*With a look of questioning defiance at her*]: Certainly.

MISS GILPIN [*Turns to EILEEN with a forced smile*]: I won't steal him away for more than a moment, Eileen. [*EILEEN smiles happily.*]

MURRAY [*Follows MISS GILPIN into the room. She leads him to the far end of the room near the door to the hall, after shutting the porch door carefully behind him. He looks at her defiantly*]: Well?

MISS GILPIN [*In low agitated tones*]: What has happened? What is the meaning—I feel as if I may have done a great wrong to myself—to you—to her—by that lie. And yet—something impelled me.

MURRAY [*Moved*]: Don't regret it, Miss Gilpin! It has saved her—us. Oh, how can I explain what happened? I suddenly saw—how beautiful and sweet and good she is—how I couldn't bear the thought of life without her—her love . . . That's all. [*Determinedly.*] She must marry me at once and I will take her away—the far West—any place Stanton thinks can help. And she can take care of

me—as she thinks—and I know she will grow well as I seem to grow well. Oh, Miss Gilpin, don't you see? No half and half measures—no promises—no conditional engagements—can help us—help her. We love too much! [*Fiercely as if defying her.*] But we'll win together. We can! We must! There are things your doctors cannot value—cannot know the strength of! [*Exultantly.*] You'll see! I'll make Eileen get well, I tell you! Happiness will cure! Love is stronger than . . . [*He suddenly breaks down before the pitying negation she cannot keep from her eyes. He sinks on a chair, shoulders bowed, face hidden in his hands, with a groan of despair.*] Oh, why did you give me a hopeless hope?

MISS GILPIN [*Putting her hand on his shoulder—with tender compassion—sadly*]: Isn't everything we know—just that—when you think of it? [*Her face lighting up with a consoling revelation.*] But there must be something back of it—some promise of fulfillment,—somehow—somewhere—in the spirit of hope itself.

MURRAY [*Dully*]: Yes—but what do words mean to me now? [*Then suddenly starting to his feet and flinging off her hand with disdainful strength—violently and almost insultingly.*] What

damned rot: I tell you we'll win! We must! Oh, I'm a fool to waste words on you! What can you know? Love isn't in the materia medica. Your predictions—all the verdicts of all the doctors—what do they matter to me? This is—beyond you! And we'll win in spite of you! [*Scornfully.*] How dare you use the word hopeless—as if it were the last! Come now, confess, damn it! There's always hope, isn't there? What do you *know*? Can you say you *know* anything?

MISS GILPIN [*Taken aback by his violence for a moment, finally bursts into a laugh of helplessness which is close to tears*]: I? I know nothing—absolutely nothing! God bless you both! [*She raises her handkerchief to her eyes and hurries out to the hallway without turning her head.* MURRAY stands looking after her for a moment; then strides out to the porch.]

EILEEN [*Turning and greeting him with a shy smile of happiness as he comes and kneels by her bedside*]: Stephen! [*He kisses her. She strokes his hair and continues in a tone of motherly, self-forgetting solicitude.*] I'll have to look out for you, Stephen, won't I? From now on? And see that you rest so many hours a day—and drink your milk

when I drink mine—and go to bed at nine sharp
when I do—and obey everything I tell you—and

...

[*The Curtain Falls*]



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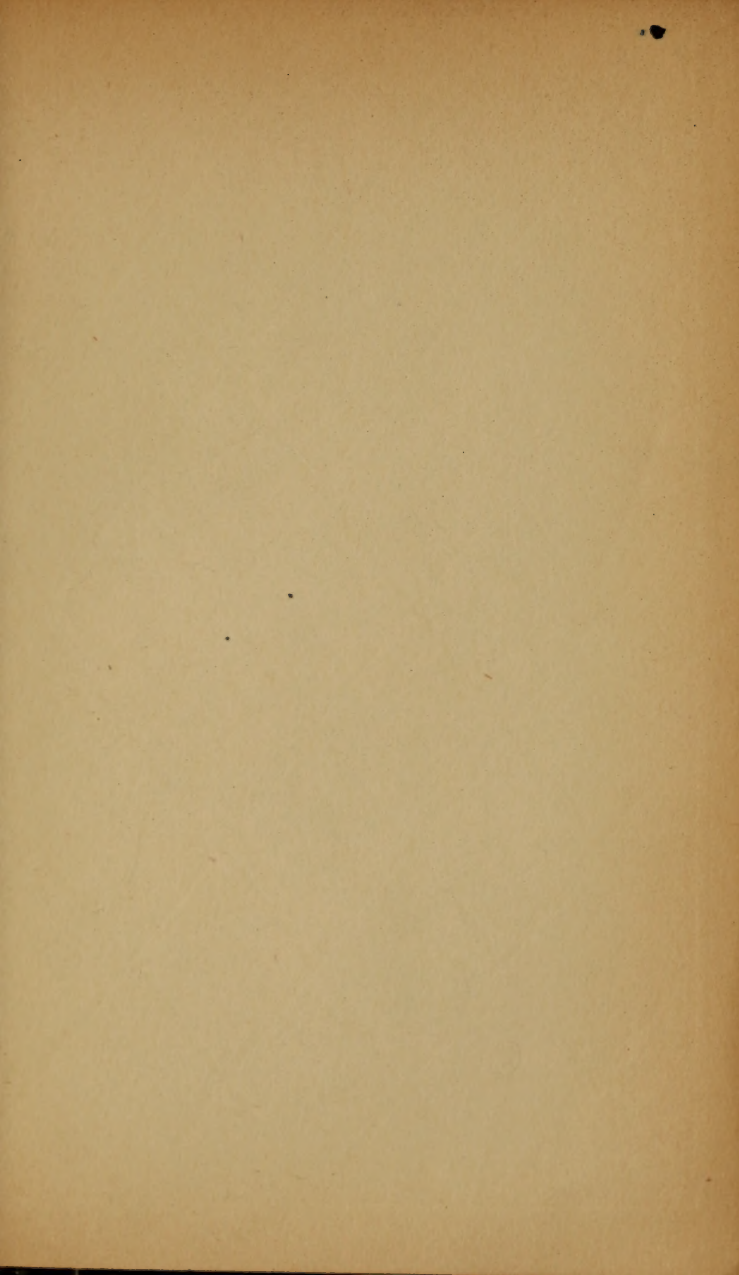
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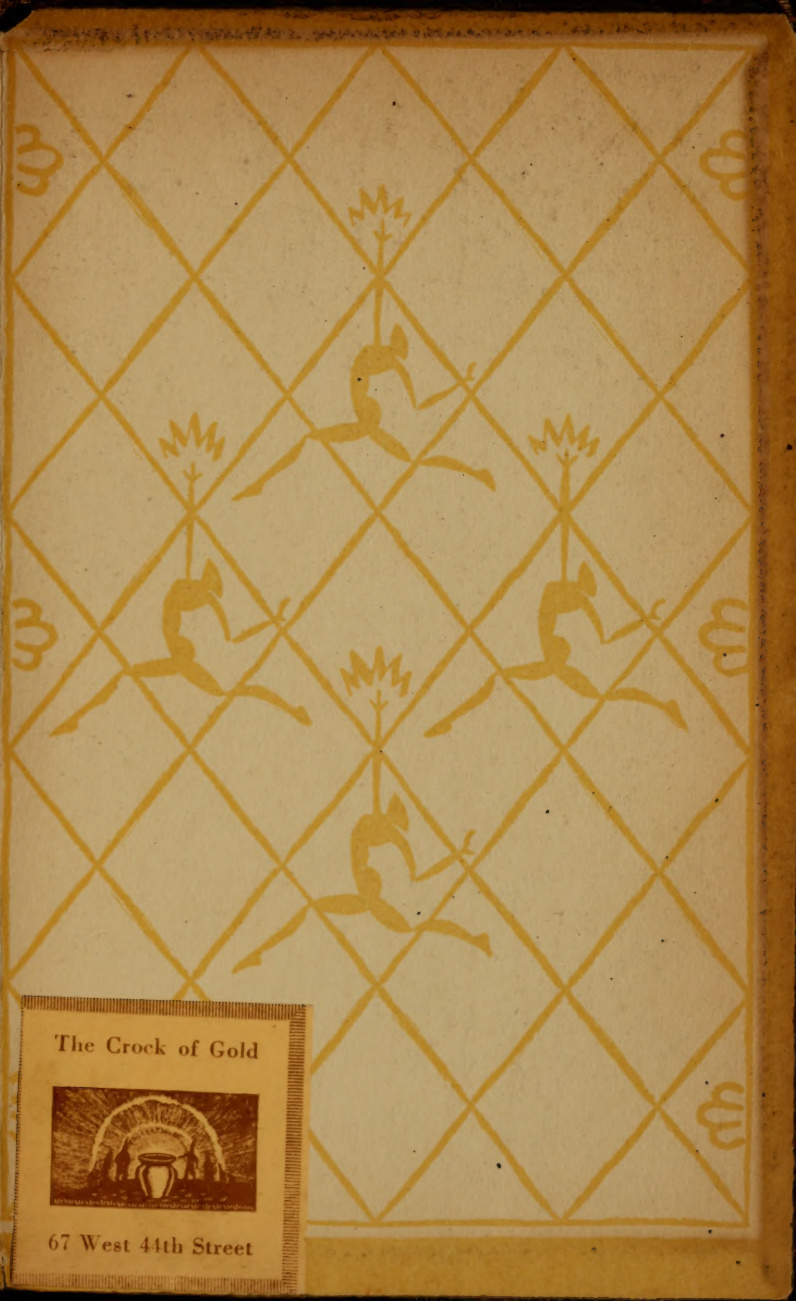
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